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Vol. XXXI.

Captain Jack in Rocky Roost.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



"I'VE GOT YOU, YOU BIG BRUTE, SO LOOK OUT!" SHOUTED THE BORDER BOY.

Captain Jack in Rocky Roost; OR, THE BORDER BOY.

(JOHN W. CRAWFORD).

Known to Fame as "Captain Jack, the Poet-Scout* of the Black Hills," "The Flying Courier," and "Wild Rider," with Incidents in His Earlier Career as a Boy Soldier.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY DARE DEVIL.

JACK CRAWFORD, though winning fame in this country, was born in county Donegal, Ireland, in 1848, and is now thirty-five years of age, a young man indeed to have won the reputation that he has scored as soldier, scout, Indian-fighter and poet.

In 1856 Jack's mother came to America and joined her husband, who was living in the mining district of Pennsylvania, and she brought with her her four children, one of whom was the hero of this story, then a boy of ten.

A bright-faced little fellow, willing to do a good turn for any one, he became a favorite with all, while his great strength and activity made him the "King of the Boys," as his little comrades called him.

To aid his parents, who were poor, Jack accepted a situation as messenger, or "runner," between the several mines and the village, and his path was a wild, desolate and really dangerous one, especially after nightfall.

Several men who had held the position had given it up on account of its hardships, and that it was one of peril may be inferred from the fact that twice had messengers been murdered in some lonely defile of the mountains, for they often carried money packages with them.

But Jack had asked for the position, and though young, the superintendent had determined to try him a trip or two.

Hardy and sinewy, Jack made the first trip in better time than had his predecessors, and thus was kept on duty.

Now and then in bad weather Jack would be late into the night on the road, but he always turned up before it was found necessary to send search parties after him.

The run was ten miles, over mountain and through valley, with several streams to cross, which, when swollen by recent rains, were foaming torrents.

* Jack Crawford is no mean writer of border verse, and his poems, published in book form, have had a most extensive sale.

Captain Jack's affection for Buffalo Bill approaches veneration, and the noted plainsman is the hero of many of the Black Hills poet's verses.—THE AUTHOR.

One day he would go to the village, and the next return to the mines, and thus he was kept constantly busy, with Sunday his only day of rest, and he so arranged it that he could spend the Sabbath in his home in the village.

One day, just after Jack had started from the mines, a terrible storm came up, and, as it continued until nightfall, the villagers predicted that the Boy Runner would not come through, and in fact did not believe that he had started.

The hours went by, until midnight came, and Jack not appearing, the idlers, who usually awaited his arrival at the village inn, began to disperse, when the first man who stepped out of the door saw a small, dark form coming through the storm at a weary trot.

"Jack has come through!" he shouted, and a yell broke from the crowd within.

The next instant Jack staggered into the bar-room, wet, muddy, hatless, and shoeless, and with pale, haggard face.

Unmindful of the cheers that greeted him, he sunk down before the blazing fire of logs, and unbuckling his waterproof sachel, handed it to the agent, to whom he delivered his messages at the village.

"Come, Jack, you must have something to warm you up, for you are all in a tremor."

"Landlord, a glass of wine for the brave boy," said the agent.

"No, no; I will not touch it, for liquor has been my father's ruin, and I will never let it pass my lips," cried Jack, half-rising.

It was not urged upon him, and the agent said:

"Well, Jack, you know best; but how did you get through?"

"Walked, run, swam, and tumbled," answered Jack, and his answer raised a laugh.

"But where are your shoes?"

"Gone."

"And your hat?"

"With the shoes."

"Are any of the foot and road bridges washed away?"

"All of them."

"Why did you start in the storm?"

"I had started when it begun."

"Then why did you not turn back?"

"Because I had started to come through."

"And come through you did!" said the agent, with enthusiasm; and he added:

"I will have some one go back in your place to-morrow."

"Oh! I'll be ready, for I have got an old pair of boots at home, and I'll take my brother's hat," was Jack's plucky response; and the landlord, a worthy Pennsylvania Dutchman, said:

"Vell, dat boy ish a tare tuyvil sure!"

"Bokelen, you have named him, for we will call him Dare Devil Jack!" cried the agent.

"Three cheers mit the Boy Tare Duyvil, mine fri'nts!" shouted the landlord; and, as they were given, he continued:

"Now, shentilmens, it ish my treats all rount, an' we'll drink der goot healt's o' t'at prave poy!"

But, in the skurry to get to the bar to enjoy mine host's treat, and the desire to drink his health, Jack had slipped out of the tap-room, and, when missed, was running home at full

speed through the blinding, driving storm; for he knew that his mother would be anxiously waiting for him, for she was aware that he would come through if the trip could be made.

CHAPTER II.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

SOME months after the incident stated in the foregoing chapter, Jack Crawford was trudging along the mountain road about sunset, and at the loneliest part of the trail he had to traverse.

He had been delayed in starting from the mines longer than usual, by some unforeseen circumstance, and knew that darkness would overtake him before he had gone far.

But Jack was not afraid of darkness, and though the superstitious villagers had told him that the ghosts of the two messengers slain, hovered about the spot of the murder, and that the mountains were full of spooks and spirits, he had never met any weird prowlers and did not, therefore, fear them.

One of the murdered messengers had been buried where he had fallen, and Jack passed his grave daily upon his trips, and had often halted there to eat his lunch.

It was a wild but lovely spot, in a little vale, and upon the banks of a little brooklet, the waters of which were cold as ice.

Many banks invited repose, and many a pleasant nap had Jack enjoyed there, so when told that the ghosts were prowling his beat, Jack was wont to say:

"I hain't afraid o' ghosts.

"It's the livin' folks that skeers me."

Upon the evening in question he was trudging along, and before him a hundred yards was the grave of the slain messenger.

The shadows were deepening in the mountains, for the sun had touched the horizon, and an owl had hooted dismally in the trees overhead, disturbed in his day sleep by the boy, and hailing his mate for the night spree the two were to go on.

The owl's mate had just answered afar off in the forest, when Jack heard a loud, angry voice, coming from ahead in the road, then the slashing of a whip, and next the crack of a pistol, followed by a cry of anguish, and a shriek of alarm.

The agent had presented Jack with a handsome belt, to which was hung his waterproof sachel, and in a holster was a handsome revolver, which the boy had learned to shoot with considerable accuracy, practicing as he went along his lonely tramp, and investing his money allowed him by his mother, to whom he gave his earnings, in ammunition.

Drawing his revolver with the air of one who had a duty to perform and intended to do it, and was rather glad of the opportunity, Jack rushed forward toward the scene of the disturbance, confident that the little valley was to become noted for another outrage.

Turning a bold point of rocks, around which the road led, Jack came upon a scene that startled him.

A carriage, which he remembered to have seen at the mines, stood in the middle of the road, and, lying motionless upon his box was

the driver, evidently dead or severely wounded.

Jack knew him well as the driver for the village livery stable from which the vehicle had been hired.

The horses stood patiently waiting, seeming willing of any excuse to get a chance to rest.

But at the side of the vehicle were three forms—two of whom were dressed in the somber garb of nuns of the Catholic Church, and the third was a large man, roughly clad, and whose face was hidden by his red handkerchief, to serve as a mask, and in which two holes had been cut for his eyes.

He had a belt about his waist, and in it were thrust two revolvers, one of the weapons having been fired a moment before at the driver.

The nuns Jack had seen at the mines, whither they had driven the day before from the village, to make some collection for a charitable object to which the miners had subscribed freely.

The robber, knowing their intention, and with no respect for the sacred calling of the two nuns, had waylaid them by the roadside, and his hand had just grasped their money, in spite of their entreaties, when Jack appeared upon the scene.

This was a case where Jack thought homicide justifiable, and he took big chances, for his aim at the highwayman was between the two nuns, who stood with their back to him, pleading with the wretch, while he faced the boy.

"I've got you, you big brute, so look out!" shouted the Border Boy, and his words caused all to start, and the footpad to keep his hand upon a weapon.

But at that instant Jack fired, and the villain staggered backward, a bullet in his breast, while the nuns dropped upon their knees, as though in prayer.

"Now don't you be scared, for it's all right," cried Jack to them, while he ran upon the man, who had staggered backward and fallen heavily upon the ground, still securely clutching his pistol, though without the power to move it.

"Oh! you have taken his life," said one of the nuns softly and earnestly, while the other glided to the side of the wounded man and tried to stanch the flow of blood.

"I guess he'd have killt me, for he's done it for poor Pat Dolan," said Jack, a little nonplused by the words of the nun.

But stepping forward, he raised the handkerchief from the face of the wounded man, and cried:

"It is Nick Newton, the worst man in the mines! But, gals, he hain't dead yet, and if we can get him to the village, for I can drive you through, Doctor Dalton might save him, for he's a clincher fer sick folks, and saled Tommy Ryan's leg off *prime*, for I seen him do it, and I was with Tommy when he got hurted, the night Widder Simmons's house got on fire, which was the day after the Fourth o' July, when Tim Riley shot his finger half—"

"Let us hasten at once, if you can drive, for the poor man's life may be spared," said one of the nuns, cutting Jack off in his history of accidents.

With the aid of Jack—or rather the Border Boy, aided by the nuns, the wounded man was

placed upon the back seat of the vehicle, and Pat Dolan, the driver, who was dead, was left upon the box.

The nuns then entered the carriage, and mounting the box, Jack drove off at a break-neck pace through the darkness, and within an hour's time drew up in front of the jail, whither his good sense had told him he had better take the "worst man in the mines," whether he was dead or wounded.

But Nick Newton the highwayman was not mortally wounded, and Doctor Dalton fetched him round all right, so that he lived to be hanged for the murder of the driver.

As for the brave Border Boy it made him doubly a hero in that part of the country, and, for his services to the nuns, the Catholic bishop sent him a gold crucifix and chain as a reward, and which Jack prized most highly.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the anticipations at both ends of the line, that little Jack could never stand the strain upon him for more than a month or two, he stuck to it during a year, and never once missed a day in all that time, in spite of summer heat and winter's icy storms.

Often it was, it is true, that he got a ride from some farmer, or vehicle going his way, and several times the agent had given him a mount, when the roads were in a fearful condition; but this was all the aid he got from any source.

He had grown thin, but wiry, and his slender form was nothing but bone and sinew.

One Spring afternoon, arriving at the mines about dark he found the greatest excitement prevailing.

Fires were built here and there, shedding their lurid light upon a large crowd of excited men, women and children.

A murmur of voices reached his ears, above which would often rise the shriek of a woman and the crying of a child.

Jack had come to know the dangers of the mines full well, and he realized what had happened, before he was told as he drew near that:

"The Kenneth Mine had caved!"

"Had the force come up?" asked Jack.

"No; over a hundred brave fellows are underneath the ground, and the shaft is still caving," was the reply.

The Border Boy made his way through the dense crowd, slipping through places where no one else could have found space, and soon stood at the shaft.

Men stood about it, but what to do they knew not.

The mine was a new one and not very large, nor was the shaft very deep.

The banks had caved in, and those below dared not make any attempt to come up, and those above feared almost to move, for the entire mass at their feet threatened to go down, and then death must end the misery of those in the mine, for it would take a week to remove that quantity of earth.

"Has any one been down to see if the whole shaft is choked up?" asked Jack.

"No, Jack, for no one dare go.

"We can hear the poor boys below calling us to be careful, but none dare put foot upon the dirt fifty feet below there, for it has stopped upon the rests, and anything might send it down," explained the miner.

"I'll go down," said Jack.

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"But, Jack, your weight might send it, for see the sides still crumble."

"Tie a rope about my waist and I'll go," was the firm response.

"No, we can send a man down that way," said the foreman, who, with every one else had not thought of that method of finding out just how matters stood in the shaft.

"No, I'm light and can do as well as a man, if I am a boy," answered Jack.

A cheer broke from the crowd at this, and, as no man seemed particularly anxious to take the risk, although there were men who would have gone, Jack was fastened in a swing, given a cap with a lamp upon it, and lowered into the shaft.

When he reached the spot where the shaft was choked up he took a careful survey of how matters stood.

He saw that a huge rock had first given way, and falling only a few feet had been checked in the shaft by the elevator uprights upon either side, and upon this rested the mass of earth and stones that had followed from above.

A slight weight more might send all down to the bottom, and more would follow, thus choking up the shaft most thoroughly.

But then it might stand much greater weight.

At any rate it was a most dangerous situation.

Below him he could hear the voices of the men in the mines, and he knew that they realized the danger of being under the mass of toppling earth and stone, and were standing back under the arches.

Above all was silence, for they waited to hear the report of the brave Border Boy.

In his search Jack soon made an important discovery, and he drew himself toward the side upon which his eyes rested.

There, back of one of the uprights of the elevator, Jack saw that the side of the shaft had been hollowed out, by some strange and fortunate circumstance, more than at any other point.

He also discovered that where there was space for him to go through, there would not be for a man, but that the nature of the ground just there was such that he could dig into it with a sharp knife.

"Pull up!" he called out.

Quickly he was drawn to the surface, and in answer to a hundred questions, he said:

"I want a rope to take with me, a good knife, and you must make a rope-ladder fifty feet long and lower it to me."

The rope was given him, a couple of large knives placed in his belt, and again he was lowered to be stoppage in the shaft.

Fastening the extra rope to the swing that held him, he put the end through the aperture back of the upright of the elevator, and then slipped through himself.

There was barely space, but he managed it, and went down hand-under-hand upon the rope.

Above him was the mass of rock and earth that might be precipitated at any minute, crushing him beneath it, or, if falling after he had joined the miners, he would have to share their fate.

But Jack's nerve did not fail him, and he reached the bottom and suddenly appeared before the group of almost despairing miners, who greeted him with a yell of delight, for, if a boy could come through, the space must yield egress to a man, was their hope.

"Hush, feller, or you'll shake ther earth down on yer, and then we'll all have a stone coffin, I reckon."

It was a weird, picturesque sight to see Jack there in the midst of that band of miners, whose white, stern faces were lighted up by the lamps upon the fronts of their hats.

"I has come to save yer, fellers; but don't go wild, or yer'll shake the rocks in on top o' yer, and we is all lost," said Jack, earnestly.

Jack then explained the position of affairs above, and said that he would crawl up the rope and make the aperture larger, and by that time the rope-ladder would be ready, and he would make it fast and lower one end to them!

And, followed by the prayers of the miners, he climbed the rope, braced himself against the elevator upright, and then began his work.

The first dirt falling sounded as dismal as earth falling upon a coffin in a grave, and such a thought flashed through every imprisoned miner's brain.

Pound by pound the stone, gravel and earth fell, until Jack felt the space was large enough for the broadest-shouldered miner of the lot.

The rope-ladder had already been lowered to him, and making one end secure he dropped the balance through the opening and called out:

"Does it touch?"

"Ay, ay, Jack," answered a firm voice.

"Shall we come up?" was the next question.

"Not yet, for they is sending down another rope-ladder to reach from the top to where I am."

The second ladder was soon made fast, and sitting in his swing, Jack then called out:

"Come up, fellows, and come slow!"

A few seconds of suspense and a head, shoulders, and body appeared in the aperture.

"Hullo, Abe, you first?" asked Jack.

"Yes, Jack, we come up as our names come, alphabetic like, you know," said the honest miner, and then he continued:

"Now you shinny up out o' this hole, lad."

"Nary, Abe, fer I sits here ter see ther posesh go by."

"No, lad, you have risked too much already, so go up."

"I stays here, Abe, and while you is argifyin' with me yer is losin' time."

"I made thet hole, an' I is goin' ter see what comes out o' it."

The miner saw that it was useless to argue with the boy, and so hastily went on to the top, where his coming, as he stepped into the glare of the firelight, was greeted with one ringing yell of joy, followed by a cheer for Jack, who muttered:

"They yells so ther'll be a yarthquake down here ef they don't mind."

"You next, Andy," said Jack, as another miner appeared, and then came another urging for Jack to go up; but the boy was firm.

One by one the miners appeared in alphabetical order until but three remained.

"Wallace and the Young boys is all now, Jack," said a miner by the name of Eustis.

And a moment after Wallace appeared.

But, as he stretched forth his hand to grasp the upper ladder, there came a tremendous uplifting of rock, a crashing of timbers, the elevator uprights, and the tons of stone and earth went thundering down the shaft.

Down with it would have gone Eustis had not Jack grasped his hand, checked his fall long enough for him to get a good hold upon the swing, from which he swung himself to the rope ladder from above, while he said coolly:

"A close call that, Jack."

"It was a might closer for ther Young brothers," was the boy's calm rejoinder.

"Yes, they are crushed to atoms, for one was behind me on the ladder, and the other a few rounds up. Poor fellows, they have no kin here, and have been in the mines but a week. If it had been any of the rest of us, Jack, there would have been wives and children to mourn us."

Just then a hail came from above, for the dust was so dense none could see down into the shaft.

"Ho! below there!"

"Is anybody alive?"

"Jack and I are all right, but the Young brothers are gone," answered Eustis, and the two then went up the shaft and soon reached the top, where Jack said afterward:

"The folks come nearer smotherin' me than did ther dust in ther shaft."

That the Border Boy was a person of greater importance still, in the mines and in the village, may readily be imagined, and the agent saw that his wages were increased so that he got enough to support his mother, while every man whose life he had saved made him a little present of some kind, for the boy would not accept money for the most valuable services he had rendered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOY SOLDIER.

JACK's nature was one that caused him to take pleasure in scenes of danger, and he loved adventure, while he possessed a most praiseworthy ambition to rise in the world.

While running his beat, in the mountains, and in fact just after he had entered upon it, the civil war broke out between the North and South.

The Border Boy's education had been, through force of circumstances, wholly neglected, for his parents were poor, and Jack having it in his power to add to their income, had no time to go to school.

In 1863 when in his fifteenth year he enlisted as a Drummer Boy in the 48th Regiment of Pennsylvania Troops, serving under the command of General Hartratt, who became afterward the Governor of the State.

From the day he became a soldier Jack Craw-

ford made up his mind that he would wear an officer's straps upon his shoulders, and to do this he knew that he must do some act of bravery to bring the eye of his general upon him.

One day he was straggling along on the march, his drum swung at his back, and in no hurry, he had dropped back to the rear of the column.

One of the wagons of the train, loaded with the head-quarter stores happened to break down at a part of the road, where it was impossible, owing to the nature of the ground, for the rest of the train, which it was leading, to get by.

Feeling assured that it would take some time to repair damages, Jack sought a convenient clump of timber and laid down to enjoy an afternoon nap.

When he awoke it was nearly sunset, and, to his surprise and alarm he saw that the command had not only gone on, but was nowhere in sight.

The place where he had taken his nap was upon a ridge, quite thickly wooded, and upon one side he saw a large force of Confederate cavalry coming along upon the road which the Union troops had marched over a few hours before.

His experience in the army had been sufficient for him to judge pretty well the number of troops in a body, and he saw that there were nearly as many cavalry as there were men in the brigade he belonged to, and that they had a battery of flying artillery too.

That his general did not expect an enemy was in his rear, and would certainly be taken by surprise by the Confederate cavalry, he knew, for the camp could not be but a few miles distant, and under cover of the darkness the attack would be a perfect surprise.

His first idea was to run at full speed down the hillside, across the little field, and thence on to camp; but he could see that the advance of the Confederate cavalry, not very far away, would come up, discover him and easily overtake and capture him.

Then a bright thought flashed through his mind.

"I'll sound the 'long roll,'"* he muttered, and instantly he made his drum-sticks rattle forth the stirring alarm.

He beat with an energy he had never before been capable of in his life, while he ran from point to point, which changed the sound so as to appear as coming from more than one quarter.

At the very first tap of the drum the advance guard of the Confederates halted, couriers dashed back to the main command, which at once began to fall back slowly to a position near by and form line of battle.

Seeing that he was successful in checking the advance, and knowing that if they did move forward, it would only be after a most careful reconnoissance and throwing out of skirmishers, Jack took to his heels, and ran like the wind.

Arriving at the first shelter beyond the field he halted, and though panting like a hound after a long chase, he again made his drum roll.

* Alarm on a drum.

Then on he bounded once more, to halt again for rest, and another sounding of the long roll.

"I guess the rebels will think the whole army is here, and getting ready for action," muttered Jack, as he took to his heels again, to suddenly halt as a volley of musketry sent the bullets rattling about his ears.

But he was unhurt, and quickly sprang behind a tree, as he saw a line of skirmishers in blue coats, deploying in the timber beyond.

"Hold on, the 48th!"

"Don't shoot, 48th!"

"I'm Jack, the Drummer Boy!"

He yelled the words, and when he saw that he was heard he stepped boldly out and advanced toward them.

"Jack, what does this mean?" asked an officer recognizing the panting boy and coming toward him.

In a few words Jack told his story, and was hurried off to the general, who heard him through, and then said:

"Well, my brave boy, you have saved us from a complete surprise, for I had no idea that there was an enemy in our rear.

"At the first sound of your drum in the distance, I sent out skirmishers, and got the men in line of battle, and you shall not be forgotten for this.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, sir, I'd rather carry a musket than a drum, and I would like to go into their ranks, for then I kin work up."

"You shall do better than that.

"Can you ride horseback?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'll appoint you a special courier at head-quarters, so go over and surrender your drum, and report at my tent for duty, and I will see that you get a good mount."

And the general was as good as his word, and from that day the Boy Soldier became a great favorite at head-quarters.

CHAPTER V.

RIDING A DEATH GANTLET.

DURING his next few months' service, the reckless courage of Jack Crawford, as displayed scores of times, would have gained for him promotion to a lieutenantcy, had it not been for his extreme youth.

One day at the hard fought battle of Spottsylvania Court-House in Virginia, Jack's general occupied a prominent position, which gave him a good view of the field.

The general had been busy sending his staff officers from point to point with orders, and several of them had fallen, killed or wounded, while the few left with him were either utterly worn out, or their horses were.

Presently the quick eye of the general detected a Confederate column moving against a point defended by some of his own men, and whom he knew could not see the coming foe from their situation.

Put on their guard the troops could drive back their enemy, for their position was a strong one.

Otherwise, did the enemy gain a footing on the point, they might bring disaster upon the whole line.

"Captain, ride with all haste and tell Colonel Dunning that the enemy are flanking him, and will soon be in his rear, if he does not turn his guns upon yonder thicket," called out the general to a staff officer, who at once dashed away upon his errand.

But his course was one full of desperate danger, for he had to ride across a position where he was under the fire of his own army as well as the Confederates'.

He had gone but half the distance when he was seen to throw up his arms and fall backward from his saddle.

"Too bad! too bad! but you must go, Pierce," and the general turned to a lieutenant who promptly obeyed.

All watched him anxiously, saw him pass his comrade, the captain, hesitate an instant and then dash on, to suddenly go down beneath his horse, which had been shot.

The general looked anxious and stern, for the lieutenant lay where he had fallen, evidently stunned.

There were but two more officers with the general, and one of them must go it was evident.

But, before their commander could single one of them out, Jack Crawford rode forward, and saluting politely, said in his reckless way:

"Let me go, gen'ral, for luck allus pulls me through."

"I believe you are right, Jack, so go ahead, for you heard the orders I gave my two unfortunate officers. Success go with you, boy."

Jack was well mounted upon a wiry, spirited, little sorrel mare, and she went away like a shot.

Down the hill, watched by the general and all about him, across the field, jumping his horse over a little brook, straight as an arrow for the point he was aiming for, the boy rode at full speed.

He had passed the captain and saw that he was dead.

He rode near the lieutenant and saw that he lay beneath his horse with one leg broken.

"If I git through, lieut'nant, I'll come by and give you a lift," called out Jack as he dashed on, and the plucky officer called out:

"God speed you, Jack!"

Straight to the point Jack went, and dashed unhurt into the timber.

He told his errand, and that two officers had fallen in bringing the order, and a cheer went up from the head-quarters hill when they saw the battery on the point turn its guns upon the thicket, and the Confederates come to a halt, and knowing that their object was discovered, slowly fall back to their line of battle.

In a few moments Jack dashed out upon his return, and he went straight for the spot where the wounded lieutenant lay.

In spite of the hot fire, the dropping of shots all around him, he sprung from his horse and aided the officer out from under his dead animal.

Then he helped him to mount his horse, and springing up behind him, the little sorrel was urged into a run for the head-quarters.

But hardly had she taken a dozen bounds, when the officer felt Jack's grasp about his

waist relax, and before he could draw rein the brave boy fell heavily to the ground.

Instantly the wounded officer returned, for he was not one to desert a comrade; but Jack lay as motionless as though dead, and believing that he had been killed the lieutenant rode on alone.

Soon after the Confederate line advanced at that point, and when night came on Jack found himself a prisoner, and most severely wounded in the lines of the Southern troops, where a kind-hearted surgeon, struck by his youth, and his pluck under the circumstances, dressed his wound, and sent him back to the hospital, with orders to give the boy every attention.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK AND THE NUN.

THE order of the kind-hearted Confederate surgeon was strictly obeyed, and Jack Crawford found himself well cared for.

His wound, which was a very severe one, and threatening to be fatal, was skillfully attended to by competent surgeons, who, as soon as the boy could be moved, struck with the grit he had shown throughout, sent him to a hospital for convalescents.

Arriving there, and nearer dead than alive, the suffering boy was placed in a small but comfortable room with four other patients, all of them wounded Confederates.

For several days Jack did not rally, but at last he grew better, and looking into the face of his nurse one day he gave a smile of pleasure, while he said faintly:

"I know you."

"Yes, and I know you, my brave boy, for you are the one who aided Sister Felice and myself out of some trouble in the Pennsylvania mountains nearly two years ago."

"I'm the boy, but I was a messenger runner then, and now I am a soldier," and Jack gave utterance to the last words with a look of pride.

"A Union soldier?" said the nun.

"That's my size," responded Jack, in army slang, which the good nurse misunderstood for she responded:

"Yes, you are very young, and of small size to be a soldier; but there are many boys in the Confederate Army."

"Oh! I'm big enough, I guess; but are you a rebel?"

"I am from the South, and my duties are here just now, and I shall nurse you back to life again," she said kindly.

"I'll bet yer, for yer won't go back on me if I am a Yank, will yer?"

"I will never forget how brave and how good you were to Sister Felice and myself."

"I've got the crucifix the bishop sent me."

"See? I guess it kept the bullet from killing me," and he held up his little gold crucifix to her view.

"You must be quiet now, and I will take good care of you until you are well," she said.

"Then I'll be jugged, I guess."

"How do you mean?"

"Put in prison."

"I fear so."

"Well, I'll not squeal, for if I'm a soldier, I've got to take chances with ther boys."

"Do you know how to read?"

"I do," she said with a smile at the question.

"Well, you're ahead o' me, for I don't."

"You do not know how to read?" she asked, with surprise.

"I knows A, B, C, and there I stick, and 'twould take a school teacher to pull me through."

"I know a little prayin', such as 'Now I lay me,' and that's all; but if you can read, you will read to me, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"When I got plugged with that Minnie ball, I had in my jacket pocket a book, but I guess the rebs stole it, though they left the crucifix."

"Was it a Bible?"

"Nary Bible; but it was 'way up in good readin', fer one o' the couriers was readin' it to me, but hadn't got through."

"He calt it Bloody Ben, the Boss of the Border."

"Maybe you has read it."

The good nun disclaimed having read any such remarkable production, and telling Jack he must keep still, she glided away, but in her mind was the resolve to teach the brave boy to read, in the long weeks that he must lie upon his bed of suffering.

CHAPTER VII.

FRIENDS AMONG FOES.

It was nearly three months before Jack Crawford was pronounced well enough to leave the hospital, and in all those days of suffering, he had been most tenderly nursed by his kind friend the nun, who belonged to an order that had nobly devoted themselves to the care of the wounded soldiers, whether they wore the blue or the gray.

One day the chief surgeon came through the hospital, where were a number of wounded Union troops, and stopped at the cot upon which Jack lay.

"My boy," he said, "owing to your youth, I made an endeavor to get you exchanged, but we have heard no reports of the success of the effort, and I am sorry to tell you that you will have to go to prison, for the surgeon of your ward reports you as well."

"All right, sir, I am perfectly willing to take chances with the other boys in blue," was Jack's cheerful answer, and the surgeon then told him that as soon as he had his dinner, to report to the guard outside of the ward.

In a little while the good sister came in, and Jack told her what had been said by the surgeon.

"I know all," she said, softly.

"Here, take this new cap which I have made for you, as yours was lost, and read what I have written on this slip of paper."

"Then destroy the paper."

"Good-by, and the Holy Virgin protect you, Jack."

There were tears in her eyes as she held forth her hand, and Jack felt himself choking up as he grasped it.

But he said in a low, earnest tone:

"I owe to you my life, and more."

"Now that you have taught me to read, I will educate myself all in my power, and try and prove myself worthy of your regard."

The good sister departed, and Jack read the slip of paper.

"You will leave here at dawn in the morning, to go over the mountains with a wagon-train, under the charge of Major Mortimer."

"He will show you certain favors, and at night, when you go into camp, Major Mortimer will bid you follow him."

"More I cannot say."

"Good-by, and the Holy Mother guide you to the end of life."

Jack understood enough of this letter to see that he was to be aided in making his escape.

He ate a hearty dinner, and, having been kept in the hospital several weeks longer than the was need for, felt as well as he had before he received his desperate wound.

Reporting to the guard, he was sent to a camp where the Union prisoners from the hospital were confined, while awaiting their removal to prison.

The next morning at dawn the train, of thirty wagons, four hundred prisoners and two Confederate companies acting as guards, pulled out on the march to the city, which was their destination.

The way led through a beautiful country, dotted here and there with handsome houses, and Jack greatly enjoyed the march after his long confinement.

"Here, my boy, you look fagged out."

"Sergeant, bring a horse here for this boy to ride!" called out a Confederate officer, whom Jack had had pointed out to him as Major Mabrey Mortimer, the commander of the train.

He was a man of forty, perhaps, and exceedingly handsome, yet with a face that wore a look of sadness and sternness commingled.

He looked like a man who had had a history and knew what sorrow was.

His form was elegant, he sat his horse superbly, and there were stories told about his being a most dashing and daring officer.

The horse was brought, and Jack mounted.

"Keep near me, sir, and mind you, no dodging," said the major, as he rode on.

Jack knew that there were men in the line who better needed to ride than he did; but of this he said nothing, and that the stern major had a kind heart, he soon discovered, for his quick eye detected the sufferers among the prisoners, and ambulances were ordered back for them.

Just before nightfall the road led them upon the mountain, from whence a grand view of the surrounding country could be seen.

As they went into camp Jack discovered an elegant manor home, surrounded by thousands of acres of farm lands, lying in the valley below, and upon the banks of a river.

There were extensive barns and outhouses, plenty of cattle dotting the fields, and the mansion was a large, rambling structure, surrounded by ornamental grounds.

Evidently it was the abode of wealth and refinement, and war's cruel ravages had not yet fallen upon it.

"Here, boy, take my horse, and your own, and hitch them in yonder thicket."

"Then, watch your chance, and strike straight down the hillside, until you come to the roadway leading to yonder house.

"There await my coming.

"Be quick, for within ten minutes the guards will be placed about the camp, and you cannot leave."

Jack saluted, and led the horses away.

The spot selected by the major was just on the verge of the mountain-side, and quickly making the animals fast, Jack did as directed, watched his chance, and disappeared over the verge.

It was a steep hill, and he found no difficulty in getting down it, until he came to the designated road.

There he halted, concealing himself in a cedar thicket, until he heard hoof-falls.

Glancing out he saw that it was the major, mounted upon another horse than the one he been riding, and which his negro servant had been leading for him all day.

Behind the major came the negro, mounted, and leading a third horse.

Seeing the black, Jack shrunk back out of sight.

But the major halted and gave a low whistle.

Of course Jack knew that it was meant for him, so stepped boldly forth.

"Well, my boy, you got away without being seen.

"Come, take this horse, and you, Paul, ride on and tell them at home that I am coming, and will bring a young friend with me."

"Yes, master," said the negro, and giving the rein of the led horse to Jack, he rode on.

"Unroll that blanket, my lad, and you will find a suit of civilian's clothing in it, and you had better put them on and throw your own aside."

Jack silently obeyed, and was soon rigged out in a slouch hat and suit of dark clothing, which were a fair fit, selected at random as they were.

"Now mount and come with me—nay, ride alongside."

"Your name is Jack, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; Jack Crawford."

"And mine is Mabrey Mortimer. I am a major in the Confederate army, and hence your foe, while yonder mansion is my home, where my parents, sisters and a young brother live."

"It is very good of you, sir, to aid me," said Jack.

"Not at all, for you are a mere boy in years, and I wish to see you get safely back to your home, while I serve you for the sake of one you once served most nobly."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, Sister Salome."

"Oh, sir; how good she was to me!

"I would have died, but for her kind nursing, and then she taught me how to read, and was so very, very good."

"Yes, and you risked your life once to save her, Jack, for she told me all.

"In fact, she detained you at the hospital until I should come to take the prison train over the mountains, that she might have me aid your escape."

"She is an angel, sir."

"Yes, Jack, she is as near being angelic, as mortals upon earth get to be.

"I will tell you a little story, Jack, about Sister Salome and myself.

"She is my cousin, but from the time I was fifteen years of age and she ten, I loved her.

"I went into the United States Navy as a middy, and when I returned home at twenty, I found her a beautiful girl of fifteen.

"Then we became engaged, and when she reached her eighteenth year we were to have been married.

"But, alas! I went upon a foreign cruise, and off the coast of Africa our vessel sighted an American barque in distress.

"Her crew had been taken down sick, and all her officers had died, so I was put on board with a few men, to take her to the nearest port.

"That night a fearful storm came up, the ship labored terribly, sprung a leak, and I was forced to take to the boats, and she sunk half an hour after.

"We were driven upon the inhospitable African coast, and my boat's crew alone landed in safety, the others being dashed to pieces.

"My men were in ill health, for I went with the barque's crew, leaving my able-bodied seamen to take the other boats, and all but two of our party died soon after reaching the shore.

"Several days after that one and myself were taken by a wandering band of Arabs, run off into the desert, and became slaves.

"My companion died in captivity, in less than a year, but I pulled through the dog's life for five long years, and then made my escape, arriving at home after an absence of seven years.

"Believing me, as reported, lost at sea, my sweet cousin entered a convent, and the day we were to have been married, she took the veil, and was lost to me forever.

"I was so broken in health, Jack, that I lived upon my home here, having resigned from the navy, until the war broke out, when, of course, I cast my sword with the South.

"Now, Jack, when Sister Salome told me how you rescued her in the Pennsylvania Mountains, and asked me to aid your escape, I feel that I am not doing such a heinous wrong in doing as she requests; so I will leave you at my house until my young brother, who has lost a leg in the service, and is now at home, finds a chance to see you safely across the lines; and I hope you may become a general, and if I get captured some day, will do as much for me," said the major, with a smile.

"Be I private or general, Major Mortimer, I'll do it, if ever I know you to be taken prisoner," said Jack.

Ten minutes after they rode up to the elegant house, and the little Northern soldier received a warm welcome, for already was he known to the household through Sister Salome.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

JACK found the home of a Mortimer one of rare comfort, and he was treated with a consideration of an honored guest.

The major's brother, who had lost a leg in the service, was as friendly to the Northern boy as though he had been a Southerner; and, after a delightful supper, which Jack ate with unabashed relish, the household adjourned to the parlors, where the young ladies, handsome, spirited girls, sung for their "Yankee boy guest," as they called the little soldier.

Jack had heard the Southern bands play "Dixie," "The Bonnie Blue Flag," and other airs of the Confederate army, and the soldiers sing them; but he heartily enjoyed listening to the stirring battle songs sung by the major, his brother, and sisters.

"Now, Isabel, sing for Jack 'The Star-spangled Banner,' and 'Tramp, tramp,'" said the major.

The maiden at once struck up the former inspiring air, and all joined in, the father of the major saying, pleasantly:

"Now, Jack, you can say you have heard Yankee songs sung in the South, and by rebels, too."

At a late hour the major bade them all farewell, and returned to camp, Jack going with him to his horse, and thanking him again and again for his friendship to him.

After a week spent at Vale Manor, the name of the estate, Jack had become wholly restored to his former health and strength; and one pleasant evening, rode off with Lieutenant Mortimer, on his way northward bound.

All waved him farewell and a God-speed, and he felt in the best of spirits.

He was mounted on a bay horse, a present to him from the major's father, and the lieutenant had given him a belt of arms to wear beneath his sack-coat.

In his pocket he carried the money he had with him when he was captured, which amounted to nearly a hundred dollars—so he felt his importance.

The lieutenant went with him to a secluded crossing of the river, and together they went over in a ferry-boat, his kind friend accompanying him until he dared not go further, as the Union lines were not far distant.

Then the two parted and Jack rode on alone.

Presently his horse shied badly, and Jack discovered lying by the roadside a man's form.

It was a soldier, clad in the blue uniform of a junior lieutenant, and he was yet breathing.

Quickly Jack dismounted and knelt by his side, while he saw not far away his horse feeding.

But almost instantly the young officer breathed his last, and Jack discovered that his coat and vest were open, and his hand was pressed hard upon a bullet-wound in his side.

He had evidently ridden that far after receiving his death wound, and then fallen by the roadside to die.

Jack had a most humane nature, and he at once determined to bury the dead soldier.

Searching his pockets he found a purse well filled with money, a note-book, containing his name and address, and a watch and chain.

His horse was an inferior one, but the saddle, bridle and trappings were good, and according to regulations in the Union army, so Jack

quickly transferred them to his bay animal, and then stood pondering an instant.

"I guess I'd better play the whole thing, for I am not far from our lines," he muttered.

Then he began to disrobe the officer, and, taking off his own clothes, he quickly made the transfer.

The officer was just his size, and his uniform fitted Jack as though made for him, and the boy felt as proud as a peacock, if he was in borrowed plumage.

Buckling on the sword Jack then set to work to dig a grave, and then, placing the body into it, repeated solemnly the service for the dead, which he had heard often enough to know by heart.

Blazing several trees with his sword, so that he would know the spot, Jack then mounted his horse and rode on toward his own lines, which Lieutenant Mortimer had told him could not be but very few miles away.

As he rode along he congratulated himself upon his escape, and muttered:

"I think, after all I have gone through, the Government ought to make an officer of me, for, if I am a boy, I guess I can do a man's work."

"Well, I've escaped, that is certain, and I've had a dead streak of luck."

"No prison hash for me, no, no, I guess not."

"But kind nursing and hospital grub."

"Well, I go back to head-quarter pickings now, and hard work; but I guess if the general could see me now, he'd say:

"Good boy, Jack! you keep those clothes right on, and I'll send on and get you a com-mish to back 'em up."

"I guess so."

"Well, I must send the poor lieutenant's purse, watch and diary home, for I have his address right here, and it will be hard for those who love him."

"Never mind, he's a soldier, and he has met his fate."

So saying Jack halted as there fell upon his ears the sound of tramping hoofs.

CHAPTER IX.

MOSBY AND HIS MEN.

THE sound which Jack heard was not a pleasant one to his ears, under the circumstances, for he beheld a squadron of cavalry coming toward him, and they did not wear the uniform to match his own.

"Rebels! I'll skip!" he muttered, and away he went at full speed.

But they had caught sight of him as soon as he had of them, and started in hot pursuit.

It was a party of Confederate cavalry returning from a dash into the Union lines, and flankers were out upon either side, and as Jack rushed in one direction he found himself hemmed in, for the column of march was contracting to cross the ferry.

Jack wheeled about as he saw foes before him and rode in the opposite direction, to run upon another party of flankers.

Not knowing but that he might be able to dash through the line from which he had at first

tried to escape, and gain his own comrades, who must certainly be following up the Confederates, he dashed through a thicket, and suddenly bounded out into the road, and right into the midst of the Confederate colonel and his staff.

"You'll surrender, sir!" sternly said the colonel, for such was his rank, and Jack coolly responded:

"You are right, sir, for that is just what I will do."

The words and air of Jack raised a laugh, while the colonel said:

"You are very young for an officer, sir."

"Yes, I'm too young," returned Jack, ruefully.

"Your name, please, lieutenant?"

Jack was about to tell his name, but concluded, as the thought flashed through his mind, that if he was searched the dead officer's papers would be found upon him, while, as he was supposed to hold a commission, he would be treated better than if known to be a private; so he answered, with a twitch of his lip at the lie he uttered:

"Henry Marsden, sir."

"Well, Lieutenant Marsden, the fortunes of war are against you, it seems."

"You rode too far from your lines toward ours, and were not expecting us to come in this direction, I suppose?"

"No, sir, I was not expecting to see any Confederate cavalry."

"Is this General Hampton's command?" asked Jack.

"This command, lieutenant, is known as *Mosby and his men*!" said that officer, with a smile.

"Oh, Lord!" said Jack.

"Captain Ruggles, be good enough to carry Lieutenant Marsden back to your company with you and place him with the other prisoners," said Colonel Mosby, and the command moved on, while Captain Mortimer Ruggles, a handsome, dashing young officer, took Jack's sword and belt of arms, and riding one side with his prisoner, waited until his own command came along.

Jack then found that he was not alone in his misery, for guarded by two companies were fully a hundred Union prisoners, half a dozen of whom were officers.

He was greeted with a nod by his fellow-unfortunates, and fell into line in silence, riding by the side of the handsome young Confederate, Captain Ruggles, who seemed to have taken a fancy to the boy soldier, and chatted with him as they rode along together as pleasantly as though one was not fighting for the "Stars and Bars" and the other for the "Stars and Stripes."

CHAPTER X.

THE LIFE-LOTTERY.

UPON arriving at his camp Colonel Mosby learned tidings which caused him considerable pain, for they were to the effect that a Union general had captured a certain number of his men, and had at once given orders for their execution.

The law of retaliation is one of the barbar-

isms and cruelties of war, for the innocent frequently suffer for the guilty.

In this case it was not an exception, for Colonel Mosby, to check the execution of his prisoners, at once ordered that a like number of Union prisoners should be shot.

Those recently taken were accordingly marched out from their prison, and being placed in line, were told that they were to draw lots in a life-lottery.

A hundred men stood in the line—brave, gallant fellows, who would not have flinched at charging a battery, but felt it hard that some of them must be sacrificed for a foolhardy act of some general wishing to punish Mosby's men.

Among those thus selected for the death drawing was Jack Crawford, and he appeared the lightest-hearted of the lot.

"I'm a lucky bird," he said to Captain Ruggles, who was present.

"I hope that luck will not desert you in this case," answered Captain Ruggles with a sad smile, for he liked not this feature of war.

There were a number sticks placed in a box, in the top of which was a hole for the hand to be put in.

All of these sticks were of white pine, and exactly the same size, and nine of them, the fat ones, had been stained black with ink.

Down the line went the box, and each man thrust in his hand drew out life or death to him.

Now and then one would get a black ball, and his face would turn a shade more livid, while some would utter a low moan of mental anguish.

At last eight black lots had been drawn out, and but one person more to draw.

That one was Jack Crawford, and to him fell the ninth.

"They didn't give me a chance to draw and show my luck, for they left me but one," he said to Captain Ruggles, with a smile and manner that showed his pluck, and won the Confederate captain's admiration.

Though a mere boy in years himself, for he was under twenty-one, Captain Ruggles said:

"I think these men should be made to draw again, for this is a mere boy, and should not have been allowed in the line."

So thought others, though a number of the drawers said that boy or man, he should take his chances with the others.

"He wears a lieutenant's uniform, and shouldn't back down," said an officer who had trembled more in drawing his lot than any others.

"Yes, I ask no favor," said Jack boldly.

"But I ask favor for you, as I do not believe you are a day over sixteen, while there is not another prisoner here under twenty-five," said Mortimer Ruggles, strongly espousing the cause of the brave boy.

Then a consultation was held by the Confederate officers, and the result was that, in spite of his protestations to take his place with the death-line, Jack was ordered out, and a drawing was again held for the lot he had held.

It fell to the officer who had cried out against the drawing being repeated, and the fatal nine

were marched off, while Jack, with the others, was sent to prison.

As he was standing in the prison-yard he saw an officer approaching whom he at once recognized as Major Mabrey Mortimer.

Their eyes met, the major started, called to him, and asked:

"Well, Jack, what does this mean?"

In a few words Jack told him all.

"And are you entered on the prison roll as an officer?"

"Yes, sir, as Lieutenant Henry Marsden."

"All right."

"Now go on to prison with the others, and I will see what I can do for you."

The result was that, through his influence, Colonel Mortimer, for he had been promoted, got Jack exchanged in a few days as Lieutenant Henry Marsden, and the young soldier went North with a large number of other prisoners just released by exchange.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE "LAND OF THE SETTING SUN."

AS soon as he reached Philadelphia, Jack's first duty was to take the train for his old home to see his mother.

But he stopped *en route* at a little village where lived the family of the young officer whose name and clothes he had appropriated.

To them he told the story of Lieutenant Marsden's death, and all connected with it, and delivered the articles found upon the dead officer, for he had clung to them through all.

Then he visited his mother, and a warm welcome was extended to the Boy Soldier, who had been reported killed.

After a short stay at home, during which he trudged over to the mines to recall old scenes, he returned to his command, and there astonished everybody, from the general down, for there was not one who did not look upon him as dead.

In fact, he nearly frightened the general's negro cook, Goliath, into fits, for that worthy spied him, believed he saw a ghost, and throwing down the supper dishes he held in his hand, rushed into the eating tent, startling all there assembled with cries of:

"A ghost! a ghost!"

Greatly to Jack's joy, he found a commission awaiting him, and was assigned to duty upon the staff; but his services were short-lived, for in front of Petersburg, April 2d, 1865, he fell again severely wounded while leading a charge.

Again was it the young soldier's misfortune to lie upon a bed of suffering for long months in a hospital, and while there the war ended and the army was disbanded.

During his convalescence he again studied hard, read all that he thought would improve his mind and add to his knowledge, and returned to his home expecting to engage in some business there with the few hundreds which he had saved up from his pay.

But the death of his mother about this time changed his plans, and leaving the village he followed the advice of the late lamented Horace Greeley, and turned his steps toward the land of the setting sun.

Full of a spirit of adventure, young, not yet having reached his eighteenth birthday, fully capable of taking care of himself, and with the world before him, Jack Crawford was trudging along a Colorado trail one afternoon, his worldly fortune with him, when he was startled by a shot up the mountain side, and immediately afterward there came another report.

Jack was no person to stand still under such circumstances, for he felt that in that wild region the shots meant more than bringing down game.

Instantly he ran up the hillside, to come upon a little cabin, evidently a miner's home, and in front of it one man with white hair and beard, struggling in the grasp of two strong fellows.

None of the three saw Jack, and as he arrived upon the scene one of the two who held the old man cried:

"Knife him, Tom, and end ther rackit!"

"Hold! Kill not that old man!" cried Jack, throwing aside his pack and grasping a revolver, which he thrust forward ready for use.

The two men turned quickly, one to receive a shot from the old man and drop in his tracks, and the other to spring toward Jack, knife in hand, while he cried savagely: "You is lookin' fer yer grave, is yer, young feller?"

But Jack drew trigger and the man fell dead in his tracks.

Springing forward Jack caught the old man in his arms, for he was staggering about as though dazed and severely wounded, and laid him gently down upon the ground.

"Who are you?" asked the old man faintly.

"A stranger in these parts and on my way to the mines," answered Jack.

"Well, when I am dead go to the mining camp down the valley a few miles and ask for Dick Dudley, and tell him his old father got it at last, and from the Twin Terrors, for that is what those two devils are called.

"Tell Dick he knows where our dust is buried and to go back home and take care of his mother and sister on what we have dug, for if he stays here he will be killed too.

"See! That fellow, Terror Tim, moved.

"He's got as many lives as a cat, and you'd better make sure of him."

"I will," said Jack, and, the old man telling him he would find a rope in the cabin, he soon had the desperado known as Terror Tim securely bound, and which was a very necessary thing to do, for the bullet had glanced upon his head, merely stunning him temporarily and not being serious.

By the time that Jack had securely bound the ruffian the old man had begun to breathe very hard, and, going to his side, he knew that he was dying, for he had been fatally wounded by the first shot fired.

He tried to get the old man to speak to him again, but it was useless, and the desperado said in a brutal way:

"Yer needn't chin him, fer I shot him, an' thet meant his chips was called in."

"Yes, he is dead, and I guess you'll hang for it!" said Jack coolly, as the old man breathed his last.

"And you'll hang, young feller, fer killin' my brother Tom thar."

"I'll take chances on that, for I fired in self-defense."

"You had no biz running inter this funeral, fer it wasn't none o' your cirkis."

"Come, get up and go with me to the mining camp," said Jack.

"To Rocky Roost?"

"Yes."

"What is you goin' thar fer?"

"To go to work."

"You is a stranger heur?"

"Yes."

"A tenderfoot, or I are a liar, tho' yer has got grit, an' yer shoots quick an' straight, or yer'd never got brother Tom thar; but say, young feller, I has dust ter give yer ef yer says ther word."

"What do you mean?"

"Greener than grass in the spring time," said the desperado.

"Yes, I'm a greenhorn in these parts, and I am sorry I had to kill a man the day I arrived."

"But what do you mean?"

"I has dust."

"Gold?"

"Thet same."

"What of that?"

"Much o' that, for I has it ter throw to ther birds."

"You doubtless stole it or robbed some poor fellow after you had killed him."

"Waal, you is a bright one, and I guesses ef yer grows up with the kentry you'll be a healthy pilgrim ter tackle afore long."

"Come, move off ahead of me, for I wish to reach the camp before sunset."

"Don't yer tumble ter my offer, young feller?"

"What offer?"

"I'll give you dust ter throw ter ther birds ef yer jist says ter me:

"Tim, thar are a trail leadin' up thet moun-ting, yer boss is waitin' up thar fer yer, so git, an' git lively."

"You mean for me to let you go?"

"Thet are Gospil yer preached there."

"Well, you are barking up the wrong tree, for I'll take you on to the camps and look up the son of this old man you have killed and turn you over to him."

Jack saw the face of the desperado whiten at this, while he said, earnestly:

"Don't do it, young pard."

"I will do it, and we will ride to the camps, as you say your horses are up the mountain."

"I lied, pard."

"I shall see at any rate."

"It's no use ter go."

Jack smiled, and then said to the desperado:

"I'll make you secure first," and he bound him fast to a tree.

Then he ascended the mountain a short distance and, as he had expected, came upon two horses, a glance at which was sufficient to show that they were magnificent animals.

Unhitching them, he led them down to the cabin and said, lightly:

"I've got 'em, you see."

The villain scowled at him, and Jack continued:

"I do not know whether to make you help me bury these bodies or not."

"What's the use?"

"Leave 'em to the wolves," was the brutal response.

"Is that the way you speak of your dead brother?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Why not?"

"He can't do me no good, and ef he'd shot you, we'd hev hed no trouble now."

"But he didn't."

"Well, I'll put both bodies into the cabin and then let the people at the camp do as they think best."

"Come, I'll help you upon this horse."

The desperado seemed unwilling to mount, but Jack placed his revolver against his head, and with an oath he placed his foot in the stirup, and, as his hands were bound behind him, the boy aided him to mount.

Once in the saddle he drove his spurs into the side of his horse, and the animal sprung forward with a frightened snort.

But Jack was as quick as lightning in his movements and seized the rein, checking the animal so suddenly as to throw him back upon his haunches.

Rendered desperate at his situation the desperado continued to rake the flanks of his horse with his cruel spurs, which so maddened the animal that he reared high in air, pawing wildly with his fore feet, and Jack, in self-defense was forced to release the reins.

At this the villain gave a wild yell, and keeping his seat in the saddle, with marvelous skill, bound as he was, he was urging his horse to flight, when Jack quickly drew his revolver and with its crack the beast fell heavily to the ground.

But the rider lighted upon his feet and was bounding away, when Jack seized him by his long hair, and dragged him to the ground, while he said as he covered him with his revolver:

"Now, don't make me kill you, for I hate to have human blood upon my hands."

The man made no reply, and forcing him to mount the other horse, Jack sprung up behind him, and rode away on the trail leading to the miners' camp known as Rocky Roost.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK BECOMES A HERO.

AFTER a ride of several miles upon the lonely trail, without meeting any one, Jack and his prisoner arrived in sight of Rocky Roost.

All along on the way there the prisoner had tempted Jack by munificent offers of gold to release him.

But the youth had remained firm, and just in the edge of the camp Jack dismounted, leaving his prisoner still upon the horse.

Rocky Roost was a place of considerable importance to the miners of Colorado, though it was not down upon the map.

It consisted of a row of cabins, tents, huts, as the case might be, running along on the mountain side, and forming one street.

There was a log structure of considerable pretensions, called the "Miner's Refuge," and then came a store or two, doctor's office, and several bar-rooms.

As he ascended the hill to the town, as the miners called the place, Jack saw a young man coming toward him.

He was dressed as a miner, in blue shirt, dark pants, stuck in top boots, a slouch hat, and had a belt of arms about his waist.

Upon his shoulder he carried a pick, evidently just purchased, and upon it was hung a pack of what appeared to be separate bags of provisions.

Jack saw that he was a young man with a bold face, and the look of one who had seen better days, and he noticed his start as he saw the prisoner.

Down went his pick and bundles, and instantly his hand was upon a weapon.

"Hold on, Dick Dudley, with yer shootin' iron, for I hain't dangersome, as yer sees," cried the prisoner.

"Terror Tim! and bagged at last," cried the young man.

"Are you Dick Dudley, sir, for so this man called you?" asked Jack.

"I am, sir," said the other politely.

"Then I have bad news for you, sir, for as I came by your cabin, this man and his brother were attacking your father."

"Good God! and they killed him?" gasped the young man, becoming livid.

"Yes, and— Hold! Do not kill a bound man!" and Jack knocked up the revolver which the young miner leveled at the desperado, and the bullet passed over his head.

"You are right. I was driven mad for the moment, and I am glad you prevented my from doing so foul a wrong," said Dick Dudley, frankly.

"Durn yer, tenderfoot! Why didn't yer let him plug me? Yer know ther Regulators will swing me," growled the desperado.

"They will do so, by heaven, Terror Tim!

"But, tell me, sir, is my poor old father really dead?"

"He is, sir."

"Alas! what news is this I will have to bear home?"

"We came here together three years ago; and, of late, luck has been in our favor, and we have dug out quite a snug sum."

"My father failed in business in the East, and we had to do something—and this is the end," and the young man seemed deeply moved; and Jack told him of the last words of his father.

"Well, my young friend, you have done what no one else has been able to do about here—and that is, kill one of the Twin Terrors, and capture the other."

"They were feared by all the miners, and known to be robbers; while in this very town they have killed half a dozen men each; and you'll be made a hero of."

"Come, I'll go with you up to the Miner's Refuge; and then we will hang Terror Tim here—and it won't take long; after which I will claim you as my pard, if you have no friends here in the mines."

"Not a friend," said Jack; and, being greatly struck with his new acquaintance, he promptly accepted his invitation, and together they went up the street to the village.

"Pards, come out and see Terror Tim caught in a trap!" yelled Dick Dudley, as they stopped in front of the hotel, and from all sides a crowd began to gather, the like of which Jack had never seen before.

Then, in a loud voice, Dick Dudley told what had occurred, and Jack, his prisoner, and the young miner, were dragged by the crowd into the bar of the hotel, and a wild-looking man demanded:

"Drinks fer the gang, includin' Terror Tim, an' we'll drink durnation ter him an' his brother, who it are our duty to send him arter ter kingdom come."

Glasses and bottles were set upon the bar, and all present grasped a glass, excepting Terror Tim, whose arms were still bound, and Jack.

"Come, Terror Tim, yer shall hev yer tod-dy!" shouted the man who had invited all to drink, and filling a glass with liquor, he held it to the lips of the villain, who drank it off with apparent gusto.

"Now, pard, yer hasn't got yer grip on a glass," and the man turned to Jack.

"Thank you, I never drink."

A number present laughed rudely at this, while the wild-looking miner stepped close up to Jack, and asked:

"Yer doesn't 'rastle benzine?"

"No."

"Is yer a gal in pants?"

"I am not."

"Is yer a Gospil-grinder?"

"I do not understand you," and Jack was making an effort to keep back his rising anger.

"I means, does yer sling pra'er fer a livin'?"

"No."

"Then you is a tenderfoot?"

"In your meaning of the word I suppose I am."

"Say, Black Matt, let the young man alone," cried Dick Dudley, coming forward.

"Yes, Matt, he don't drink, he says, so let up on him," said another.

"Nary, fer I hain't thet kind o' pilgrim."

"He are a tenderfoot, an' I is goin' ter show him how we does biz in Rocky Roost."

"He hev tuk in Terror Tim heur, an' says

he hev cashed Terror Tom's chips fer him, an' he hes got ter drink whar I says that, or I'll drive him out o' ther Roost.

"Now, young pard, 'nominate your beverage, or get out o' thet door, an' keep skippin' fer Black Matt says so."

"Do you mean that you intend that I shall drink with you, or you'll drive me out of the mines?" asked Jack.

"That is jist what I said."

Quick as a flash Jack sent his good right fist into the vicious face peering into his own, and with such terrific force that the bully went down as though felled with an ax.

Before he had hardly touched the floor Jack had his foot upon his neck and a revolver pointing down into his face, while he said, coolly:

"I came here to roost, and I guess the place isn't big enough for both of us, so suppose you travel, old man."

A perfect yell went up from the crowd at these words, with cries of:

"Kill him, pard tenderfoot!"

"Clip his ears off!"

"Call in his chips, fer he's no good!"

"Make him dust!"

"Set him a-goin' pard!"

Jack had seen too many exciting scenes in his short life to be disturbed by the noise and confusion his act had aroused, and he said coolly, as he took the bully's weapons:

"Now if I let you up will you go?"

"I hain't goin' ter linger whar everybody is ag'in' me," was the hoarse reply.

"Then go, but if you tarry, I'll kill you," and Jack removed his foot, and the wretch slowly arose to his feet.

"Make him pay for the drinks, boy pard, fer it were his treat," yelled one.

"No, I'll call it my treat, though I drink only water," and he turned to the bar, as the bully, Black Matt, bolted out of it, and continued:

"What do you drink, gentlemen?"

All called for their respective "p'izen," and then the prisoner's fate was quickly discussed, and settled, for he was dragged from the hotel, and ten minutes after Jack witnessed the carrying out of border justice, and the honor of placing the noose about the neck of the desperado was offered him, and was politely refused.

The horse of the dead man and his personal effects, by the same border law fell to Jack, and he found himself a hero even in that wild community, and was very glad to return with Dick Dudley to his cabin in the mountains, for the young miner was more to his fancy than the other citizens of Rocky Roost.

Leaving the horse which he had inherited from the dead desperado, at the Miner's Re-

fuge to be kept for him, Jack set out on foot with Dick Dudley, and shortly after sunset arrived at the cabin, rendered desolate by the murder of the old miner.

CHAPTER XIII.

JACK BECOMES A MINER.

WHEN Jack and his new found friend arrived at the lonely cabin upon the mountain side, all was dark and gloomy.

The dead horse still lay where he had fallen, while the bodies of Miner Dudley and Terror Tom were found in the cabin.

The wolves of the mountain had already scented the dead, and were howling dismally around.

It did not take the two friends long to drag the horse to the edge of a precipice, and tumble him over, when the swift current at its base carried it off.

But the bodies of the miner and desperado were carefully buried, Jack digging the grave of the latter apart from the last resting-place of Mr. Dudley, whose son performed the last sad rites for him, and who appreciated the kindness of his new-found comrade in not burying the villain near the man he had helped to murder.

"You see," said Dick Dudley, as the two sat together in the cabin that night, resting from their labors:

"Father and myself are supposed to have struck it rich, and to have hidden away a large quantity of gold.

"But the truth is, we have only a paying lead, and have accumulated only about enough to keep us out of want at home.

"Now I intend returning home very soon, say within a week or so, and I intend to make you a present of our claims, and we will draw up the papers to that effect in Rocky Roost, you pretending to buy them from me."

"But I am willing to buy them, and I have a few hundred dollars," said Jack.

"No, I'll not sell the claims to you, but give them, with tools, cabin and all; but you had better get a partner, for this is a lonely place to live in without company, and a dangerous one too."

"I should think so," remarked Jack, but he seemed perfectly willing to live there.

"And let me warn you against that Matt Monroe, Black Matt, as we call him, both on account of his dark skin, hair and beard, and his black deeds too.

"He has been a perfect terror and bully at the Roost, and no one has dared oppose him, and stop his way. You caught him off his guard to-night, though I had him covered, for he should never have struck you.

"But you hit a fearful blow, Crawford."

"I'm hard fisted, quick, and have a well-grown muscle," said Jack.

"That is evident; but you look out for Black Matt, for you humbled him most completely, and he intends to hit back."

"I'll keep my eyes open."

"Do so, and you are quick enough to let no man get the drop on you."

"Yes, I can draw pretty quick," said Jack, modestly.

"And are a good shot, too?"

It was a question, rather than an assertion, and to answer it by actions instead of words, Jack drew his revolver and said:

"I will show you."

There was the mark of an ax in a large log of the opposite side of the cabin, and Jack very coolly raised his revolver and as quickly as finger could pull trigger fired the six shots.

Dick Dudley sprung to the side of the cabin, while Jack coolly remained seated, and cried:

"Every bullet is here and three square inches will cover them all."

"You'll do, Crawford, for there is no man about Rocky Roost that can beat you in lightning shooting and nailing center too."

"Where are you from?"

"Pennsylvania."

"You have never lived on the border?"

"No, but I have come out here to live, for I rather like the wild life of the plains from what I have heard of it."

"But where did you learn to shoot?"

"I have known how since I was a boy of ten, and practiced a great deal while I was in the army."

"You are too young to have been in the army."

"No, I served for two years and over in the army."

And then the two chatted together, each telling the other the story of his life, until the dawn broke, for after what had happened neither seemed to care to go to bed.

The following day Dick Dudley showed Jack about the country, where the claims were, and where to find the best game, and the pools that had the largest fish.

"I trade at Dan Dolan's at the Roost, and he gives me the best the place affords for my money," explained Dudley.

"Neither father or myself have ever kept a horse, but as you doubtless love to ride, and in Terror Tom's animal you have a treasure, I will help you to rig up a shanty for him, and over in the valley there is splendid grazing for him."

Thus passed several days, and Jack became initiated into all the mysteries of mining, and how to take care of himself in border life.

The stable was built, and the horse transferred to it, and Jack was made acquainted

with store-keeper Dolan, from whom he could buy, at an exorbitant price the necessities of life.

Then Dick Dudley left word at the Miner's Refuge to have Overland Andy, the stage-driver stop for him on the second trip east, and the two friends returned to the mountains and set to work with a will in the claims.

Dick Dudley had suggested a pard for Jack, in a young man who lived up in the mountains some miles beyond the Roost.

"He's above the lot out here, Crawford, and is working hard to get his little pile and return to the East," said Dick.

But they could not find the young man, and so Jack was left alone, when the stage rolled away bearing his friend and his treasure with it. Dick waved him farewell as he sat on the box with Overland Andy, and Jack saw him gazing at the clump of cedars where his father was buried, as the coach rolled out of sight.

"Well, pard, has Dick Dudley gone?"

Jack started and turned quickly, to find a horseman near him, the rumble of the wheels having drowned his approach.

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK'S NEW PARD.

"Yes, Dick Dudley has just left," answered Jack, turning upon the horseman, and gazing upon him with a searching look.

He found a young man, perhaps twenty-four or five, with golden hair, blue eyes, a blonde mustache and a face that was frank, honest and fearless.

He was dressed in the regulation miner costume, only his clothes were of a better material than those usually worn in the mines, and he wore a handsome pair of cavalry boots, and a dove-colored broad brimmed sombrero.

He was well mounted, and his horse was thoroughly equipped, while for arms he carried a repeating rifle, a pair of revolvers and long knife.

"Are you the one that came with Dudley up to my camp looking for me?" asked the stranger.

"Are you Carr Courtland?"

"Yes, that is my name, and I am not ashamed to own it, as are many up in these parts. What is your handle?"

"Jack Crawford," answered Jack, rather liking his companion already.

"Well, Jack, if we are not good friends it will be your fault."

"But did Dudley wish to see me particularly?"

"He wanted me to meet you, as I have his claims now, for I suppose you have heard of his father's death?"

"Yes, and I heard how you did the work for the Twin Terrors, and afterwards laid Black Matt out at the Refuge."

"He attempted to bully me and I let him have it."

"But Dick says you have not been full of luck since you came to the mines, and thought you might wish to go pards with me in his and his father's claim."

"I'll do it, if your figure isn't too high, for my pile can be sized by a few hundred."

"Well, we'll go to work together and share alike, for I like you."

"The claims didn't cost me a dollar, and I'll not sell to you what I didn't have to buy."

"You are generous indeed; but first let me ask if Dick took his dust with him?"

"Yes."

"Well, have you got a horse?"

"I have."

"It was Terror Tom's animal."

"Then he's better than mine, and he'll need to be good, for we have a hard ride before us, as Overland Andy is a fast driver."

"Where are you going?"

"You know Black Matt?"

"Yes, we got acquainted the other day," said Jack dryly.

"One time he did me a good turn, and though I repaid the debt, he has always had an idea I was as bad as he is, and has come to me several times to aid him in some jobs of deviltry."

"I have never aided him of course, but I have not betrayed him, and so he came to me yesterday, told me Dick Dudley was booked for the East, and was to carry part of his dust with him."

"He also said that there were no other pilgrims going East on the coach, and asked me to go with him to the Blue Rock, halt the coach, kill Dudley, and take his gold."

"The villain."

"Ah yes, he is all of that."

"I told him I had another work on hand, and then he said we could go masked, so as not to be known by Overland Andy, and then he had another little scheme against you, who had bought out Dick Dudley."

"I refused on the plea of other work, and he said he would have to get Buck Taylor and Old Israel, two of the worst characters of the mines, to help him."

"Now I know a cross-cut to Blue Rock, and we can just go there and catch Black Matt in his own trap."

"I am ready," cried Jack eagerly, and saddling his horse, five minutes after the two young miners were on their way by a mountain trail to head off the coach at Blue Rock.

CHAPTER XV.

A BATTLE WITH ROAD-AGENTS.

THE trail which Carr Courtland took to the Blue Rock, where Black Matt had decided to

lie in wait for the stage-coach, was a hard one to travel, and several times he looked back to see how Jack would get over certain difficulties.

But Jack was at home in the saddle, and followed close upon the heels of his guide, who soon remarked:

"You ride well, old man."

"Have had to," was Jack's laconic reply.

They passed several small mining camps on the way, but soon got into the fastnesses of the mountains, where no miner's habitation was to be found.

"Do you see yonder spur of the mountain?" asked Carr Courtland.

"Yes."

"Well, Blue Rock is just beneath that."

"The trail winds around the spur, and runs alongside of a precipice, and behind the huge boulder, known as the Blue Rock, Black Matt intends to halt the stage."

"But we'll be there, and have plenty of time, for I have come much faster than I expected we could, as I did not know how you could ride."

In half an hour more they halted in a dense thicket growing upon the mountain side, and leaving their horses began to creep toward the end of the spur.

At last they reached a point that was just over the Blue Rock, and could distinctly hear the voices of the road-agents who were crouching in the shadow of the boulder.

Just then they heard the rumble of wheels, and Carr Courtland said in a whisper:

"The coach is coming, and Andy has driven hard I can tell you."

"All right, I am ready," answered Jack coolly, drawing a revolver from his belt and examining it.

The ears of the road-agents also heard the roll of the wheels, and a hoarse voice called out:

"Ready, pards, fer our fortin' is a-comin'!"

"You bet," cried another, and the three stood in a row at one side of the boulder, which jutted out from the base of the spur, and around which the stage-coach must pass.

From their position above, some fifteen feet over the heads of the road-agents, Jack and his companion beheld the lumbering old vehicle come in sight at a slapping pace.

But, as it drew near the Blue Rock, with the precipice upon one side, and a rough roadway to travel over, Overland Andy reined his team down to a walk.

At his side sat Dick Dudley, smoking his pipe, and apparently little dreaming of danger.

"Come," said Carr Courtland, and he stepped softly down upon the Blue Rock.

Silently Jack followed him. Both held a revolver in each hand, and halted at a position

just over the road-agents, but out of sight of them, and of those on the coach-box.

Nearer and nearer came the stage, until just as the leaders reached a level with the Blue Rock, and the vehicle was in the narrowest part of the roadway, the three road-agents sprung out from their covert, and in trumpet tones, Black Matt shouted:

"Hands up! Yer dust is ourn!"

Quickly did Overland Andy put his foot upon the heavy brake and rein in his team, while completely cornered, the two men had nothing to do but obey, while poor Dick Dudley saw, in that second's time, all of his hard-earned fortune fading from him like a flash.

"Up with your own hands, you thieving devils!"

The words came from the lips of Jack Crawford, whom Carr Courtland had told to act as spokesman, and the two friends had sprung out upon the end of the rock, and pointed their weapons down upon the road-agents, from whose lips broke a cry of horror, so completely were they taken aback.

But knowing their fate if they surrendered, Black Matt at once determined to fight it out right there.

In spite of holding the advantage, Carr Courtland was taken off his guard, for he did not expect resistance on the part of the road-agents, and at the crack of Black Matt's pistol, he fell forward, and rolled off of the rock down into the road.

But, before he had fallen, his slayer was a dead man, for Jack had sent a bullet through his brain, and a second shot from his revolver broke the leg of Old Israel, another of the road-agents, while Dick Dudley's unerring aim brought the third robber down.

Unable to hold his horses, rendered wild by the firing and excitement, Overland Andy had to let them dash along, for to rein them in there, on that narrow ledge, would precipitate all over the cliff.

As they darted away, the wounded road-agent shrieked loudly:

"Don't drive over me, for God's sake!"

Seeing the man's danger, Jack in the nobleness of his nature, leaped from his high perch, at the risk of injury to himself, and tried to drag the doomed man out of his awful peril.

But too late, for the heavy front wheels crushed him beneath them just as Jack laid his hand upon him.

There was one piercing yell of agony, repeated as the hind wheels followed, and the stage dashed on, leaving Jack Crawford standing alone among the dead, and both Overland Andy and Dick Dudley tugging at the reins to endeavor to bring the runaway team to a halt.

Kneeling by the side of his new-found friend, Jack found that he was dead.

He had saved Dick Dudley's gold and lost his own life.

Going to the three road-agents, Jack saw that they were dead, too, and he muttered:

"Well, I've begun well in life on the frontier, and if this thing keeps up I'll have to stake out a claim for land to bury my dead in.

"Why, I'm as bad as the Lero of the book, 'Bloody Ben, the Boss of the Border,' which dear, good Sister Solame told me she had never read, when I asked her in the Confederate hospital.

"Well, my new pard has gone already, and from the way those horses went off, I may have to bury Dick Dudley and the driver, too.

"No, there they come back now," and the stage appeared in sight, returning to the scene of the fracas.

CHAPTER XVI

SEEKING NEW FIELDS.

THE experience that Jack Crawford had met with during the few days of his mining in Colorado had put a damper upon him.

His nature was not one to seek turmoil, and he abhorred bloodshed; yet was not backward, as the reader has seen, in taking his own part if driven to it.

After he had, aided by Dick Dudley and Overland Andy, buried the dead, he returned to his lonely cabin, while his former friend went on his way eastward, full of gratitude for the part Jack and poor Carr Courtland had played in saving to him his fortune.

So enthusiastic was Overland Andy over the affair that he told the story at every stage station, and when he returned to Rocky Roost he made known the full particulars of the battle with the road-agents, and so exalted the boy miner that the miners that night made an arrangement to strike off work the next day, and go in a body to call upon the young hero.

Jack was in his claim when a miner approached, and informed him that:

"All Rocky Roost were up at yer lay-out waitin' fer yer."

"Am I to be hung?" asked Jack.

"I guess not, boy pard, fer we hes come ter do yer honor, hevin' heerd from Overland Andy how yer laid out Black Matt and his gang.

"Oh!" and Jack threw down his pick, and accompanied the miner to his cabin.

It did really seem as though all Rocky Roost had come to the young miner's cabin, for there was certainly a large crowd, and Jack was informed that the place was left almost deserted.

A few speeches of a crude character were made, welcoming the youth to their midst, and hoping that he would dig a fortune out of the hills.

Jack laughingly replied in a few appropriate words, and surprised all, who knew that he was not a drinker, by producing a demijohn full of whisky.

Jack explained that it had belonged to old Mr. Dudley, and as he was a teetotaler, the liquor might as well be drank then and there, and the others heartily agreed with him, and then, to his surprise, nearly every man produced a flask, and as plenty of game and provisions were in the cabin, the young miner invited his friends to dinner, and a really joyful day was passed, the principal amusement being target-shooting, and to the amazement of his visitors their host was the dearest shot of the entire party.

When his visitors departed Jack set things to right, and then set down to his studies, for the youth devoted considerable time to acquiring knowledge.

Thus the days passed by, Jack digging in claims with ordinary success only, and only going to Rocky Roost when he needed provisions.

He was utterly alone in the world, and yet his was not a moody nature, and he made the best of the situation.

For awhile he had hoped that the Dudley claims would pan out rich; but they soon began to fail, and he had not the patience to continue to work them, and set his mind upon a change of base.

Mining life, under more cheerful circumstances, he might have liked; but he loved sociability, and thought that he would prefer to live in some more desirable settlement than was Rocky Roost.

About this time one of the miners from the Roost came to see him, and told him that he had heard that they were wanting good scouts at the forts in Nebraska.

At once Jack made up his mind to go there, and, as he knew his visitor was a poor man, with a wife and two children with him in the mines, and a claim that panned out less than nothing, he said quickly:

"Josh, I tell you what I'll do."

"What, Jack?"

"Your shanty isn't as good as mine, is it?"

"Not by a thunderin' sight," was the frank rejoinder, and the miner added:

"This are a palice, Jack, for it hev two rooms and a stable."

"And how lies your claim?"

"Pays nothin' on ther dollar."

"Well, how would you like to become pard with me, Josh?"

"How w'u'd I like it, Jack?"

"Yes."

"How w'u'd a duck like ter swim, boy pard?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Josh."

"You come here with your family, Josh, and go halves with me in the claims."

"You do the digging, and I'll go up in Nebraska on a little prospecting tour for luck."

"If you strike it rich, all right; we are pards, and if the old leads don't turn out a fortune, still all right."

"Now, I am one to go at once when I make up my mind, so I'll start out within the hour, and you can go after your family whenever you please."

"Put it there, pard, and Heaven bless yer, fer honest, things was lookin' dismal fer me."

"But, Josh, this is no bonanza you are getting, for you'll have to work hard to make your five dollars a day, unless the ore pans out better than it has since I have been working."

"Mine don't pan out five a week, Jack, so I'm happy, especially when one is ter live in this heur palice."

Half an hour after Jack mounted his horse and rode away to seek new fields, while Josh McGrath mounted upon Carr Courtland's horse, which the Boy Miner had left with him, started off after his family.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FORTUNATE RETURN.

WHEN the Boy Miner left his cabin in Colorado, he had not definitely formed any plan for the future.

The report that scouts were wanted in the Nebraska forts, caused him to believe that he could readily get a position as such, and he knew it would not take him long to learn the country.

He had often heard of Buffalo Bill, and longed to make his acquaintance, and perhaps in time, he thought, he might win fame as a scout too.

He knew that he disliked the wild life led by the miners of Rocky Roost, and he hated the popularity he had won simply through taking human life.

His first night's camp was made at a pleasant spot in the mountains, on the banks of a small stream, and, with plenty of game, he had killed during the afternoon he had a substantial supper, and was soon fast asleep.

He was awakened in the night by a loud snort from his horse, and springing out of the wicky-up he had made for himself to sleep in, he saw the animal pulling furiously upon the lariat, to free himself from the tree.

It was bright starlight, and Jack saw the cause of the animal's fright.

A huge form was moving toward him.

At first the youth felt that it was an Indian, and he expected to be at once engaged in his first fight with red-skins.

But a second glance showed him that the form was too massive for a human being,

while a fierce growl betrayed that it was a monster bear.

Jack had brought with him the repeating rifle of poor Courtland, which he had taken as his own, for there was no one else to claim it, and he had also gone to the young man's camp, at the suggestion of the miners, and secured the other effects of the unfortunate victim of Black Matt.

This rifle he now threw up to his shoulder and fired.

The bear was hard hit, but not so badly wounded as to prevent his turning upon his human foe and rushing upon him with savage growls.

Jack stood his ground manfully, and once, twice, thrice he fired in quick succession, and at his feet fell the bear, in the agonies of death.

It was a proud moment for Jack Crawford.

He was utterly fearless, was penetrating alone the wild border-land, guideless and friendless, and alone in the night had met and slain a huge monster of the mountains.

Had it been his "first Indian," he would not have felt prouder over his achievement.

When he again sought rest, he sunk into a deep sleep, and he did not awaken until the sun was high above the horizon.

Then he viewed his huge game, and was congratulating himself upon having such a valuable weapon in the repeating-rifle, when he started, his face flushed and paled by turns, and he cried:

"By the Star-Spangled Banner! but I have come off and left poor Courtland's papers, which I intended sending to his friends when I got a good chance.

"Poor fellow! he seemed to live in fear that he would be killed on the border, for he had left those photographs, letters, and the ring, already addressed to the party to whom he wished them sent, and a written request that any one finding them, after his death, would forward them to their destination.

"And now I have come off and left them where I hid them in the cabin.

"But I will return and get them, for I am in no hurry, that is certain.

"And I'll take old Josh back the bear-skin."

So saying, he set to work skinning the bear, and having accomplished this task, started on the back trail for his cabin in the mines.

It was late in the afternoon when he rode up to the cabin, and the sounds that greeted his ears were by no means pleasant ones.

He heard the loud weeping of children, and there was that in their voices that told him something had gone wrong.

Dismounting, he quickly entered the cabin to find two children wailing bitterly.

He had several times been to McGrath's cab-

in, and he recognized them, as they did him; and before he could ask for their father, one of them called out:

"Oh, mister, they has taken par up ter the Roost ter hang him, and mar has gone, too.

"Oh, mister! don't let them bad men hang poor par!"

"How long have they been gone?" asked Jack, as he run out to remount his horse.

"Dunno, mister; but they must be a'most thar by now."

Jack waited for no more, but dashed away like the wind down the trail.

Why the miners were going to hang poor Josh McGrath he had not asked, nor would he lose time in doing so.

It was sufficient for him to know that the poor miner was in danger of his life.

A true-hearted man, Josh was liked by all who knew him, and treated with more deference by all, as he was one of the very few men who had brought his wife with him to that wild place.

Along the road, as fast as his fleet horse could carry him, the youth rode, and at last the cabins of Rocky Roost came in view.

He saw a large and excited crowd moving toward the tree upon which Terror Tim had been hanged, and which, in fact, was known in Rocky Roost, from the many executions it had aided in, as "The Death Tree."

As he rode up the steep streetway, still urging his tired horse, Jack saw a form suddenly drawn up above the heads of the crowd.

At the same time a loud shout was heard, followed by piercing shrieks in a woman's voice.

One glance was sufficient for the youth to recognize in the man thus swung up the honest, rough face of Josh McGrath.

"Out of my way!

"Quick!

The ringing cry startled all, and the fall of hoofs caused many a man to spring aside.

Then, up to the tree dashed Jack, back upon his haunches the tired horse was reined, and, seizing the form around the waist with one arm, with his knife the daring youth severed the rope, and lowered the man, still conscious, to the ground, where he was supported by his wife and one or two men who sprung to her aid.

Then, drawing his revolvers, Jack faced the crowd, expecting trouble for himself.

But not a word was said, and many avoided his flashing eyes.

"What had poor Josh McGrath done, pard, to hang him like a dog?" he asked, as no one seemed to have anything to say.

"They was hangin' him fer killin' you, pard Jack," answered a man, one who had aided the mourning wife to support her husband as his feet touched the ground.

"I'm rather a healthy looking dead man, pard," said Jack.

"That are so," said one, and no one else contradicted him.

Dismounting, Jack then stepped up to Josh McGrath, who was rapidly recovering from the effects of his hanging, and said feelingly: "My poor pard, they served you rough, didn't they?"

"Jack, boy, ef I hed did what they said, then I oughter hev been sarved rough; but they 'cused me o' killin' and robbin' you."

"They come ter see yer, and yer c'u'dn't be found.

"I tole em yer hed skipped fer Nebrasky, but they didn't believe me, an' then they jist fotched me heur ter string up, an' tho' ther old 'ooman come along ter beg fer me, it were no use, fer up I went, an' you hes saved me."

Jack then turned to the crowd, many of whom were looking very sheepish, and told them of his partnership with Josh McGrath, and that he was going away for an indefinite time.

Then he returned with the poor man and his wife to the cabin, a miner lending them horses, and passed the night as their guest.

But the following morning, having secured the package he had returned for, he once more set out upon his trail toward the Northwest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ADVENTURE WITH HORSE-THIEVES.

It was certainly a most perilous undertaking for Jack Crawford to boldly invade an unknown land to him.

He knew that there were trails leading up to various parts of Nebraska, and he depended upon his own pluck and skill in woodcraft to carry him right.

He had been told that there were hostile Indians in his path.

But Jack was as cunning as an Indian himself, and somehow did not feel the mortal dread of the red skin that many do.

He was well mounted, thoroughly armed, knew how to use his weapons, had nerve enough to get out of a tight place, and was fully competent to take care of himself.

His early messenger life in the Pennsylvania mountains had been a world of service to him, his experience among the miners had greatly aided him in reading mankind, and his career as a soldier had done him a world of good, to which his later existence in Colorado had greatly added.

Thus self-confident, the youth went on his way alone.

Mountains were traversed, rivers crossed, and a wild country gone over, and the north-west trail unerringly stuck to.

One afternoon, just before sunset, Jack

reached the banks of a large stream which he knew must be the South Platte river.

He was looking about for a good spot in which to camp for the night, when he was startled by the clatter of hoofs.

His only place of refuge was a dense thicket near by, and into that he darted with great haste.

Hardly had he secured a hiding-place, when about a score of horses came in sight.

They were riderless, with saddles and bridles on, and at each horn hung a carbine.

That they were a band of cavalry horses was evident.

They were coming at a gallop, and behind them, over a roll of the prairie, appeared two horsemen.

They were in buckskin and feathers, rode two saddleless mustangs, and their darkly-painted faces indicated that they were red-skins.

As the horses dashed by, Jack, to his surprise, heard the following conversation between the two horsemen, whom he had supposed to be Indians, and one of whom rode some distance in advance of the other.

"Say, Dan, thar hain't no danger o' them comin' arter us, fer thar hain't a foot of 'em mounted, so I cries go inter camp," called out the one in the rear.

"Nary, pard, for them sogers will foller ther trail on foot, an' ef we camps now, they'll git near enough by night ter see our fires.

"I are fer goin' on an' savin' our necks."

Then the two men passed on, but their words had let Jack into a secret.

"They are horse-thieves, disguised as Indians, and have run off a number of horses belonging to soldiers.

"Now is my chance!"

Out from the thicket he rode, turned the head of his horse in the direction taken by the horse-thieves, and went off at a rapid gallop in pursuit.

The clatter of their horses prevented the two men from hearing the hoof-falls of the animal ridden by Jack until he was almost upon them, and then the man in the rear wheeled quickly to utter a cry of alarm as he beheld a pursuer hot upon their trail.

Jack had his rifle ready for use, and he hailed loudly with:

"Hold on there, or I fire!"

The answer of the two men was the drawing of their revolvers with lightning quickness and the firing of several shots in rapid succession.

Jack did not wish to fire unless driven to it, so that before he had time to draw trigger, the bullets were flying by him like hail, all excepting one, which sunk into the head of his horse and brought the noble animal down.

His rider tried hard to catch upon his feet,

but was unable to do so, and had rather a severe fall.

But he was quickly upon his feet, and then, dropping upon one knee, took a deliberate aim at the foe furthest from him and fired.

The success of his aim was at once proven, for the man's hands were seen grasping wildly in the air for an instant, and then he fell heavily from the back of his horse, still grasping the reins so firmly as to check the speed of the animal and bring him to a halt.

Seeing his companion fall, the other horse-thief drew rein an instant as he came up to him, and the act was fatal, for again Jack's rifle cracked, and falling forward, the man dropped off, while the frightened horse bounded away in chase of the squadron of cavalry steeds.

Then Jack ran hastily toward the spot where the two men lay, one of them still holding his horse by the rein, and in a moment more, with an exclamation of delight, he had seized the animal thus cleverly gained, for the rider had the lariat bound about his arm, and, though dead, had thus aided his foe to a mount.

Without a moment lost in viewing the dead, whom a casual glance showed him were white men disguised as Indians, even had not their conversation have done so, he mounted the horse and galloped rapidly on after the flying squadron.

To overtake and turn them in their flight was but a few minutes' work, and as he put them on the back trail, he went to his dead horse and threw his saddle and bridle upon his new mount, after which he drove his captured steeds rapidly back the way they had come.

Instinctively the animals followed the trail they had come, and as darkness settled upon the prairie, Jack discovered a light in a distant clump of timber, which he knew must come from a camp-fire.

And straight toward it the jaded horses went, until at a slow trot they entered the timber, with Jack hanging back in the rear, for he was not certain who might be the builders of the camp-fire.

"Hurrah! boys, every horse has come back to us," shouted a voice, and, thus reassured, Jack rode also toward the timber, until he heard the ominous words:

"Halt! who comes there?"

"A friend, who has driven your horses back to you, for I captured them from two pretended Indians who were running off with them," assured Jack, in his distinct clear voice.

"Dismount and advance, friend!" came the response, and Jack readily obeyed.

He found himself in a cavalry bivouac, a party of troopers who had left Fort Morgan on a scout two days before, and halting for a noon-day rest, had had their horses cleverly

run off, as they had believed by Indians, who had been concealed in a ravine near by.

Jack told the story of his capturing the stolen horses, and in a modest manner, as though his exploit was a most commonplace affair.

"Where are you from, may I ask?" said the officer in charge.

"The Colorado mines, sir."

"And where are your companions?"

"I am alone."

"What! alone in this wild country?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lost?"

"No, and yes, sir, for I was going nowhere in particular so that I struck a fort up here."

"Well, you can go with me to Fort Morgan, my young friend, and if you care to enlist, you can readily do so."

Jack said that he was anxious to become a scout, and was told that at Fort McPherson there would be no trouble about securing employment of that kind, as Buffalo Bill, the chief of scouts at that fort, was more than willing to give any good man a lift.

"Buffalo Bill you say is there?" eagerly asked Jack.

"Yes."

"Stationed at Fort McPherson?"

"Yes, he is Chief of Scouts for the Fifth Cavalry, under General Carr," assured the captain.

"Then I start for Fort McPherson at day-break," firmly said Jack.

"Better go to Morgan with us first, and you can go on to McPherson with a train that will start for the Platte soon."

"And besides, Colonel Pierce would like to thank, and reward you, for what you have done for us to-night."

"I don't care for thanks, and would accept no rewards, sir."

"But what Colonel Pierce is it that you speak of?"

"Colonel Newton Pierce."

"I know him, sir, or once did, and I guess I'll go to the fort with you first, for I would like to see him again," said Jack, and the following morning, after a visit to the spot where he had recaptured the horses, and the burying of the half-devoured bodies of the horse-thieves, the squadron set out for Fort Morgan.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN OLD FRIEND.

WITHOUT accident or adventure the cavalry squad arrived at the fort, and the officer in charge, ushered Jack Crawford at once into the presence of his commander.

In a few words he told the story of the clever capture of the horses, in broad daylight, when the command had halted for rest, and

not believing an Indian was near, and then of Jack's gallant fight with the horse-thieves, and his bringing the animals back to camp.

"You are a gallant fellow, my lad, but what are you doing in this country?" said the colonel.

"Perambulating, sir," answered the youth.

"It is a most dangerous country to perambulate in, my boy, even for an army party, as the captain has just discovered."

"Yes, sir, but my motive was to strike some of the forts and get into scouting service."

"You need not go further to do that, for I will engage you as a scout, and, young as you are, after the service you have already rendered, you'll soon work your way up," said the colonel.

"I thank you, sir; but the captain told me that Buffalo Bill was at Fort McPherson."

"Yes, he is chief of scouts for the Fifth Cavalry."

"So the captain said, sir."

"Do you know Cody?"

"No, sir, but I hope to," was the frank reply.

"Ah! I see, you would like to seek service under that noted scout?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, you will have an experienced teacher of prairie craft if you go with him; but I would like to keep you here."

"I will return, sir, if I cannot get Buffalo Bill to take me as one of his scouts, for I have served with you before, Colonel Pierce, and know of no one I would rather have for a commander," and there was a merry twinkle in the youth's eyes, while the colonel said quickly:

"Ha! I knew that I had seen you before, my lad, but, for the life of me, I cannot tell when or where."

"You were but a lieutenant then, sir."

"It could not have been during the war, for you are too young to have been in the army at that time," said the colonel, reflectively.

"It was during the war, Colonel Pierce, and you were a lieutenant on the staff and I a courier."

"Your name, please?" and the colonel looked mystified.

"Jack Crawford, sir."

"No, no, no, not the Jack Crawford I knew there?"

"Yes, sir."

"No, for he was killed, and—"

"I was not killed, colonel, though I shaved it pretty close."

"I am Jack Crawford."

Instantly the colonel grasped his hand, while he said in a quivering voice:

"Yes, I see it now, you are brave, noble little Jack."

"I could not place you, for I believed you

dead, as I left the staff after I recovered from my wound, and was ordered to the Western army.

"Jack Crawford, I owe you my life, and God knows I shall never forget it."

"Captain!" and the colonel turned to the officer present, "I was carrying an order from the general, at the Battle of Chancellorsville, when my horse was shot and fell upon me, breaking my leg."

"I was also stunned by the fall."

"Soon after, this gallant youth, then a little boy, and a staff courier, passed me mounted upon a wiry little horse he always rode, and he told me, as he went by that he would help me upon his return, if he was not killed."

"He carried the orders in safety, returned, dragged my horse off of me, aided me to mount his one, sprung up behind me, to fall, as I believed, dead, from a Minnie ball."

"I rode back for him, but believing him dead, went on."

"Now we meet again, and once more am I in his debt for his gallant service to you."

"Now, Jack, at this fort you stay, and you shall be a scout, hunter, Indian-fighter, or anything else you will."

"Can I say more?"

"No, colonel, and I will remain," was Jack's prompt response, and it made his young heart glad to meet one whom he had known before, and whom he could call a friend of the

"Days of auld syne."

CHAPTER XX.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE DARK.

THAT Jack Crawford was pleased with the turn his life had taken there is no doubt.

He had something over a thousand dollars in money, was drawing a fair salary as scout, owned the fastest horse at the fort, a present to him from Colonel Pierce, and was popular with all who knew him.

Seeing that Jack was anxious to learn all he could about the life and duties of a plainsman, Colonel Pierce placed him under the special eye of an old hunter, guide and Indian-fighter, with instructions to teach him all he could of prairie-craft.

"I'll do all I kin, ker'nell," said the old hunter.

"But ther lad do look as ef he'd be a tuterin' me afore long, fer he hes got it in him."

"Leastwise, I'll take him on a leetle tramp soon, an' see ef it are all looks and no grit."

Several days after, Old Leather Legs, as the scout was called, said to Jack:

"Leetle pard, there are Injun trails in these parts, an' ther orders is thet you an' me goes out an' fetches in a live Injun."

"A dead one won't do?" asked Jack.

"Waal, we'll see," was the cautious reply, and soon after the two started upon a scouting trip in search of red game.

There was no better man for Jack to learn trailing and Indian signs under than Old Leather Legs.

He had been a trapper for long years, dwelling in daily and nightly peril of losing his scalp, and had learned red-skins' cunning and ways most thoroughly.

In all he did, he acted with caution, and, having taken a fancy to the young aspirant for border fame, he was careful to teach Jack all that he could.

Their first night out the two camped upon the banks of a small stream, in the shelter of some scattering timber, and hardly had Jack gotten well to sleep, when he was awakened by his companion with:

"Leetle pard, Injuns!"

"Where?" asked Jack, instantly wide awake.

"Over thar.

"Lend me yer knife an' I'll go arter them."

"Let me go, too."

"No, you stay jist heur, and mind yer, don't yer shoot ef a dozen Injuns bounces yer.

"They means ter git our horses, an' you jist watch for 'em, fer they mout crawl nigh yer.

"Don't shoot, but ef yer hes ther grit an' ther sinew yer kin bounce one an' hold him until I comes back.

"Ef thar is two or more, jist light out."

Jack listened to these kindly, whispered instructions, and promised to obey them to the letter, and the old scout stole away in the darkness.

The moment he had disappeared the youth was all eyes.

He searched the prairie closely, and all about his glances roved looking for some moving object.

At last he thought he detected something moving just out of the edge of the timber.

He looked more closely, and was certain that he could not be mistaken.

It might be a wolf, and it might be an Indian.

Convinced that he was right, he could have killed whatever it was with a shot, but he remembered the advice of Leather Legs, and with perfect confidence in the old scout, he did not even raise his rifle or draw a revolver.

Nearer and nearer the object came, and at last he discovered that it was no wolf:

A moment after a form arose erect, and against the star-lit sky Jack saw distinctly revealed a mass of feathers.

It must certainly be an Indian in full war-paint and feathers.

Again the form crouched down and once more crawled in the direction in which Jack stood, concealed by the trunk of a tree,

Instantly Jack made up his mind as to what he would do.

He leant his rifle against the tree, unbuckled his belt of arms, and laid them upon the ground, and then, with a mighty spring, was upon the crouching form.

There was a surprised grunt, a fierce resistance, and the two were engaged in a deathlike struggle.

Over and over they rolled, neither uttering a word, and in silence they grasped at each other's throat and strove to shake off the clutch of the other.

Suddenly Jack, as wiry as a snake and possessing marvelous strength for one of his years, managed to get his adversary upon his back and his knee upon his breast, and certainly was getting the best of it, when his hands relaxed their grip at the words:

"Say, leetle pard, I guesses this cirkiss hes got ter close."

"Leather Legs!" gasped Jack.

"It are me," was the quiet response.

"I thought you was an Injun."

"Yas, an' ef I had been yer'd hev hed my sculp, fer I are played out, I confesses.

"Yer must excoose me, leetle pard, but I put up a leetle game on you ter try yer grit.

"Thet is why I borrered yer knife an' told yer not ter shoot; but all ther same, I tuk ther caps off o' yer weepins ter-night when I were a-lookin' at 'em.

"I put ther Injun bonnet on, an' then, lordy, how yer did bounce me.

"I thought I were some on ther rough an' tumble, but yer is as limber as a snake, an' strong as a catamount.

"Jerusalem, but my bone an' sinew will be sore fer a week.

"But, I hes tried yer, boy, an' yer hes got ther cleanest grit I ever tackled in a youngster, fer ter bounce a man yer berlieved a Injun, dependin' on yerself ter do ther biz fer him.

"Put yer gripper thar, leetle pard, and then we'll go to sleep."

Jack laughed at this unexpected termination of his supposed struggle with an Indian, and having re-capped his revolvers, again sought rest, and dropped to sleep leaving Old Leather Legs laughing to himself at having gotten routed in his tussle with the youth, who had risen still higher in his estimation.

CHAPTER XXII.

RESENTING AN INSULT.

AFTER a successful scout, directly into the Indian lines, Jack and Leather Legs returned to the fort, and the old man was loud in his praises of his young pard.

He told over and over again how he had "played Injun on the boy," and well-nigh got killed for his pains.

Then he told how Jack was as cool as ice in the greatest danger, and would make a great "Injun trailer."

A few days after their return Jack was over at the post, where there were a few cabins about the sutler's, when he was approached by a young man, a discharged soldier, who was known to be a desperate character.

"I have heard you is a terror," said Nat Ross, the man referred to, and he laughed rudely as he addressed Jack.

"No, I do not set myself up for a bully," was the quiet reply.

"Well, Old Leather Legs is trying to make the camp believe that you is ther boss rastler, ther boss shot, and has got more sand than any one else about.

"But I don't believe it."

"You are right, the old scout has drawn me too fine," responded the young scout.

A large crowd had gathered about them, of settlers, soldiers, and several of the fort hunters, and it was evident, that being well primed with the sutler's liquor, Nat Ross intended to push the affair to a fight.

He had served out the term of his enlistment, and then remained about the fort, hunting, and some thought horse-stealing, though it could not be proven on him.

He was a man of great strength, though always was ready to use a weapon to protect himself, and was looked upon as a bully.

Those who had resented his insults by a blow, had been severely punished, and several times when a man had drawn a weapon upon him, he had been shot before he could use it.

Jack had heard of him and Leather Legs had warned him against the man, so he wished for no trouble with him.

"Waal, that is what I think too, and I is glad you has the sense to see it.

"Yas, Leather Legs has drawn you too fine," repeated the bully.

"You better see the scout and tell him you object to his saying a thing in my favor, and I guess he'll oblige you," said Jack with a light laugh, as he walked away.

But the bully was bent on mischief and called out:

"I say, pard, ther colonel had better take good care of his pet, or he'll get hurt."

Jack paid no attention to this, while a few laughed.

This emboldened the bully to again call out:

"Well, pard, I don't care what the colonel and Old Leather Legs says about you, for I has my opinion and it's way down, I hain't afeerd to tell yer."

Quicker than a flash Jack had wheeled upon the bully, his revolver covered his heart, and advancing upon him, he said sternly:

"I desire to know your opinion of me, sir, and you'll give it."

This was carrying the war into Africa with a vengeance.

The bully had determined to force Jack into a difficulty.

He had told his minions, for all such men have a following of cowards at their heels, that he would:

"Lick ther colonel's pet for 'em, so that they w'u'dn't know him at head-quarters."

He had seen Jack approaching the sutler's, and had chosen that time with the remark:

"Now, pards, I'll show yer that ther youth are a coward, and ther colonel and Leather Legs lies when they harp about his grit and great deeds."

He had begun by insulting him, and was so convinced that Jack would not fight him, that he was caught off his guard, and the revolver, cocked, and with the finger lightly touching the trigger covered his heart, before he had even made an effort to draw his own weapon.

"Yer has got ther drop on me, pard, and that hain't squar'," he growled.

"Yes, and I intend to keep it, for if you move a finger, I shall rid this fort of the vilest bully that dishonors it."

"You give me a chance, and I'll—"

"You had your chance, sir, and I was simply the quickest in the draw.

"You insulted me publicly, and I intend to make an example of you in public."

"You durned young wolf, I'll get even with yer fer this."

"You are in a bad way to threaten, sir.

"Now give your opinion of me, please, that all may know it."

"It hain't a good one," growled the bully.

"No one expects the opinion of such a man to be a good one, but we'll hear it."

"Waal, I thinks yer puts on a heap o' style."

"Go on, sir."

"Thet yer hain't no great Injun-fighter."

"More."

"And thet ef it were a squar' fight atween us, I c'u'd lick yer."

"I wish to hear more."

"Well, you is a durned coward, to hold ther drop on a man as yer does on me."

"Well, I have heard what you have had to say, and I would like to have you listen to me.

"I have been told that you intended to drive me from this fort, and all kinds of threats you have made.

"Now, if I make a threat I carry it out, if it is in my power to do so.

"And I intend to do so in this case if you do not obey me.

"You have insulted me, and you shall ask my pardon for it upon your knees.

"Down now, and do so, or I'll kill you, so help me Heaven!"

The bully and all else saw that Jack Crawford meant every word he uttered.

The wretch still wanted a getting-out place, so said:

"Well, you has me dead, so I'll do it, but I warn you it is death atween us ther next time we meets."

"So be it, ten minutes after we part.

"But now, down on your knees, and do as I tell you!"

"I kin 'pologize 'ithout gittin 'on my knees," sullenly said the bully.

"No, pard, you can do nothing of the kind.

"Get down!"

"I won't!"

The cold muzzle was pressed hard against the forehead of the bully, and Jack spoke but one word:

"Obey!"

The man saw that the youth meant all he said, and did obey.

"Now apologize," commanded Jack, when the man was upon his knees.

"What shall I say?"

"That you retract your words."

"I does."

"Now I will leave your arms with the sutler, and you can get them after a while.

"Then, if you wish to find me you will know where to look for me."

Jack disarmed the bully as he spoke, and handed the belt of arms to the sutler, and was about to turn away, when Colonel Pierce stepped out of the sutler's cabin and said:

"Here, my man, I have something to say to you.

"Take your weapons, and I give you just one hour to leave this fort, and if you do not depart, I'll string you up.

"Go."

The bully slunk away, amid the cheering of the crowd, and Jack and the colonel went on together to the fort.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HELPED OUT OF A TIGHT FIX.

SOME weeks after the incidents related in the foregoing chapter, Jack Crawford rode out alone on a scouting trip.

He had been sent by the colonel to see if there were any signs of Indians about, and had not gone a dozen miles before he discovered that there were.

He struck a trail, and following it, became convinced that there were some twenty or thirty warriors in the party and that they belonged to a larger force, evidently on the war-path, he was convinced by their coming so near the fort.

While following upon the trail his horse suddenly started forward, and glancing behind him Jack saw that he too was followed.

There were some score of Indians in pursuit, and they were almost in range.

He was well mounted, however, and had no fear, but was surprised to see suddenly loom up in front another band, the very red-skins he had been trailing.

He saw that he was hemmed in, for he was between two fires, and the nature of the land upon either side was such that he could not ride rapidly over it, while from their positions the Indians could.

Jack thought quickly, and acted promptly.

He dropped from his horse into a small ravine, and forced the animal into the ditch after him, hopping his legs so as to throw him down.

Then he was ready for work, and led off by dropping a red-skin from his pony with one shot, and a mustang at another.

The Indians were checked in their retreat by this, and another was toppled over by Jack's unerring aim, as they hastened out of range.

But they saw that they held the advantage, and were preparing to charge upon the youth, and the end must soon follow.

But Jack was cool and determined, and laid his rifle before him ready for use, and placed his revolvers so that he could grasp them in an instant.

A wild yell, and the Indians prepared for the charge, when suddenly a louder war-cry than the one which came from their lips, was heard, and the rattling of a matchless Winchester rifle was heard issuing its death-notes.

Down went a warrior here, a warrior there, and pony after pony dropped, while upon the scene dashed three horsemen.

The one in advance was a superb-looking man, with large, earnest eyes, long hair, and the physique of a Hercules.

He was well mounted, and, as the Indians scattered, he rode up to Jack, and called out, in manly, ringing tones:

"Well, pard, you had more than you could get away with, eh?"

"Yes, sir, and I owe you my life—for my end would have soon come," and Jack, having taken the hopples from his horse, sprung out of the ditch, followed by his animal.

"Don't mention it, my friend. But, from what point do you hail?"

"I am a scout, from Fort Morgan."

"Good! I am going right there, for business calls me there.

"Mount your Gothic steed, and come with us, while we give these red rascals a turn.

"These are my friends, and they are good fellows—Doc Sewell, and Lou Weeks, both scouts.

"Now tell me your hand'e."

"Jack Crawford, sir; but you have not given me your name."

"Ah! they call me Buffalo Bill out here."

"Buffalo Bill!" and Jack grasped the hand of the famous man he had so longed to meet, and, as they rode on to the fort together, told his story, and Bill said:

"Well, Crawford, you are the very man to live here and grow up with the country, and my opinion is that you'll make a name for yourself."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE prediction of Buffalo Bill was verified, for Jack Crawford did "grow up with the country," and he won a distinguished name as scout, guide and Indian-fighter.

He also became noted as the "Flying Courier," having made most remarkable rides with dispatches from fort to fort and port to port.

At one time he was special messenger for the New York *Herald*, and in carrying his dispatches was called "The *Herald's* Wild Rider."

In the Indian war in which the lamented Custer and his gallant troopers lost their lives Jack Crawford was second in command of scouts under Buffalo Bill and won an enviable reputation.

During his leisure hours in camp he has written many "Border Poems," which have won general favor with the public.

At present he is mining in the West, and whenever and wherever found is the same noble fellow that he has been from boyhood.

THE END.

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